UWorld | RxPrep

2026 NAPLEX® COURSE BOOK

Study guide for the NAPLEX® for those testing in 2026

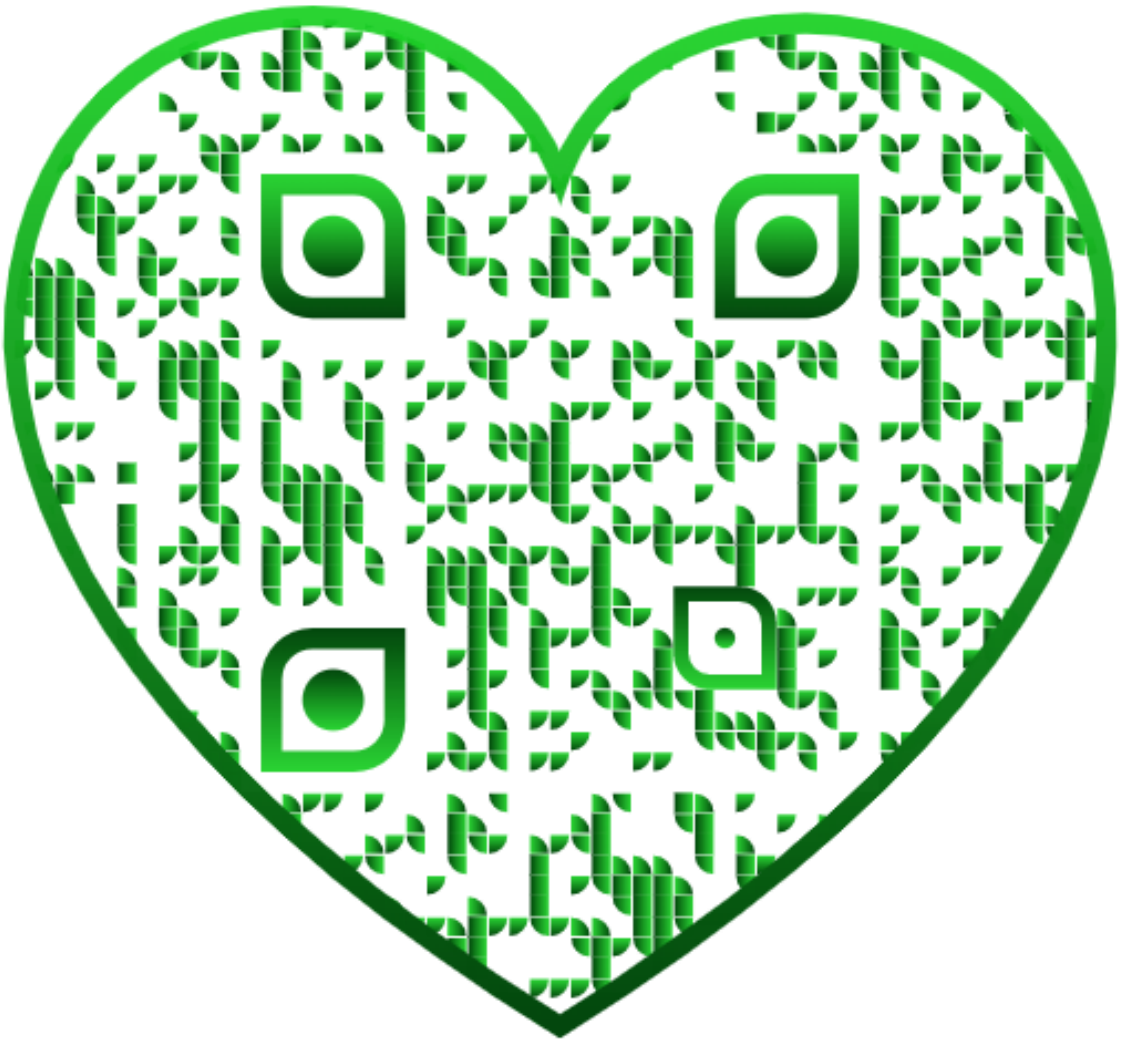
Edited by

Meera Aggarwal, PharmD, BCPS
Chelsea Bombatch, PharmD, BCPS
Peter Colley, PharmD, BCIDP, AAHIVE
Monica Do, PharmD, BCPS
Stephanie Garrett, PharmD, BCPS
Melissa Sandler, PharmD, BCCCP
Angie Veverka, PharmD, BCPS

Contributors

Ayesha Araya, PharmD, BCPS
Veronica Raco, PharmD, BCCCP

Book design and production
Joni Hutton



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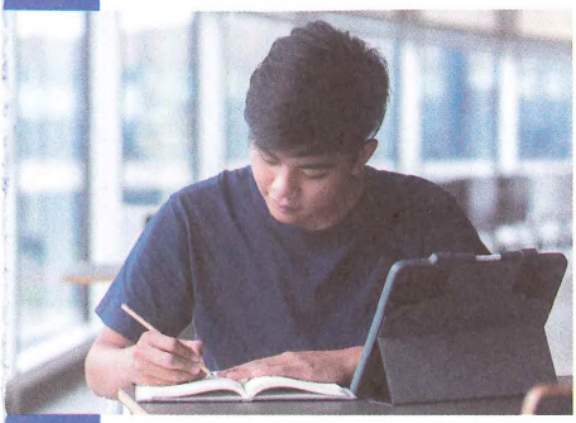

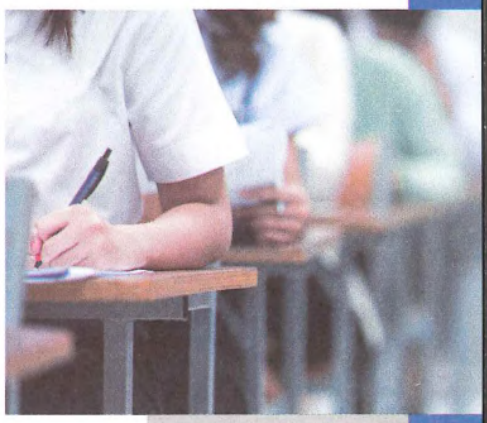

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UWORLD RxPREP STUDY MATERIALS

Success on the NAPLEX® requires more than just luck; it demands a thorough understanding of drug knowledge and the ability to apply it effectively to case-based questions. Use the tips provided in this chapter to maximize your chances of passing the exam.

The UWorld RxPrep online course includes a question bank (or QBank for short) and video lectures that are used in conjunction with this course book. These materials are available online at pharmacy.uworld.com. The online course includes everything you need to be successful on the NAPLEX.

COURSE BOOK UPDATES AND ERRATA

The course book is updated annually to be current for the pharmacist licensure exam. It is best to study from the most current edition available for your period of testing.

New drug information and guidelines are continuously published, and pharmacists must remain current in their drug knowledge. The UWorld RxPrep pharmacists review new drug approvals and new guidelines on an ongoing basis; most new information will be added into the next edition of the course book, but some time-sensitive information that is relevant for testing in between book publications will be summarized online.

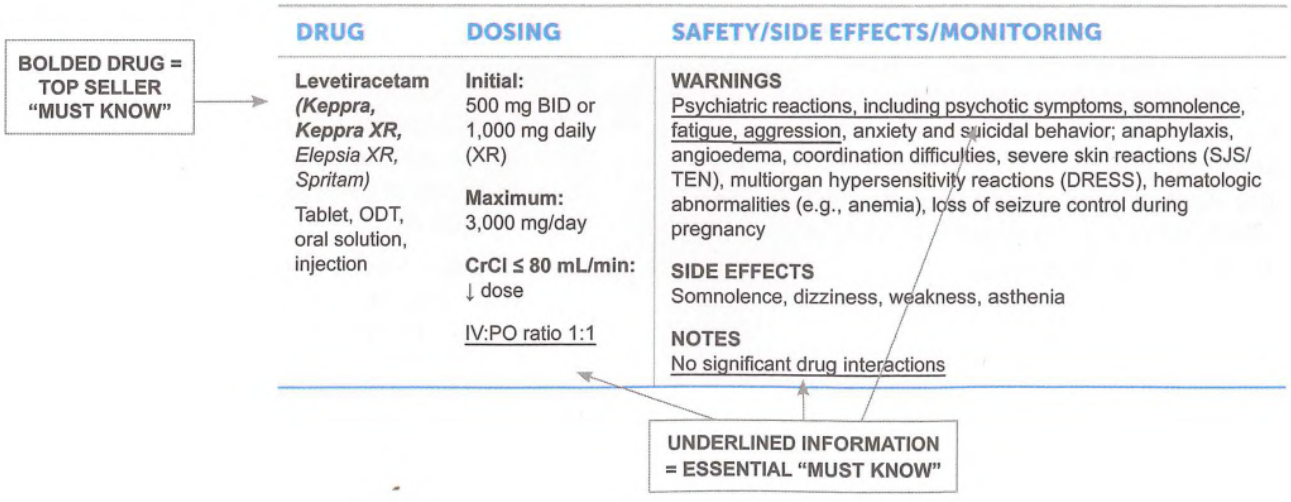
Refer to the "Resources" section at pharmacy.uworld.com to find relevant updates for the NAPLEX. Any course book corrections are posted in the same location..

HOW TO USE THE UWORLD RxPREP COURSE BOOK

This course book offers several tools to simplify complex information. Drugs that are top sellers or have significant safety issues are highlighted in **bold** in the drug tables. These drugs are crucial for the NAPLEX; it is important to known them well, including their brand names (if bolded). Any information that is underlined is essential for the exam.

Additionally, Study Tip Gals and Key Drugs Guys are used to emphasize important information. Study Tip Gals provide explanations, simplifications or summaries of points, while Key Drugs Guys help you learn about drugs with similar characteristics. Do not skip these; they contain highly testable information! Look for the light bulb symbol for a Study Tip Gal or a key symbol for a Key Drugs Guy on the chapter's table of contents. You can also find them using the table of contents for the course book.

EXAMPLE DRUG TABLE



STUDY TIP GAL BOX

STUDY TIP GAL

- The gal with the light bulb points out a study tip. This information is MUST KNOW for testing.
- The study tips include an approach to complex concepts, a way to organize the information or a way to remember the information.

SELECT GUIDELINES/REFERENCES

Select Guidelines/References
This box highlights the main guidelines/references for the topic. The main source of information about the medications in this course book is the FDA-approved package labeling (package inserts).

FOUNDATION CHAPTERS

The course book includes foundation chapters at both the beginning and end, in the sections titled Pharmacy Foundations Part 1 and Part 2. The information in these chapters will apply to other topics. Complete these early; learning this material will help you throughout your studies. Then, revisit them at the end of your studies to ensure retention of the information. Foundation material may be required to answer questions in any QBank.

PRACTICE CASES, QUESTIONS AND CASE SCENARIOS

To answer questions on the NAPLEX, you will need to extract information from case scenarios. For example, you may be asked how many grams of protein per day are being provided by a patient's parenteral nutrition order, or which drug is the best option to treat a patient's infection. Practice cases and sample questions that are designed to be similar to cases you might see on the exam can be found in several chapters, allowing you to test your knowledge. Look for case scenarios in grey shaded boxes. These scenarios complement the QBank, which is the best place to apply what you have learned to case-based scenarios.

KEY DRUGS GUY BOX

OTHER DRUGS

KEY DRUGS

The guy with the key points out key drugs.

Drugs in this box are MUST KNOW for testing (e.g., drugs that cause hypoglycemia).

The drugs in the back box (if present) have the same concern, but are less well known.

GETTING STARTED WITH A STUDY SCHEDULE

Begin by creating a study schedule. To help you get started, the course book topics have been organized based on the time it usually takes to complete them (see table on the next page). In addition, three sample study planners can be found online at pharmacy.uworld.com on the NAPLEX Study Guide page, under the "About Exams" dropdown.

HELPFUL POINTERS FOR CREATING YOUR STUDY SCHEDULE

- Fill in the schedule by allocating adequate time for each of the topics. Use the time estimates shown in the table, with your best guess if you will need more or less time to complete a topic.
- Include math early in your study schedule and allow time to practice frequently. Repetition is required for mastery.
- Alternate between math, foundation and clinical topics to stay engaged, or integrate topics using the QBank.
- Always leave weekly catch-up time. It is normal to fall behind; catch-up time will keep you on track. Do not skip chapters or QBanks as any topic can appear on the exam.
- Leave the two weeks before your estimated test date open. The last two weeks are used to take the UWorld RxPrep Practice Exam, remediate any missed areas, and review the math and other topics that may have been forgotten.

> Alternate your study time between math and clinical topics, or integrate multiple topics using the QBank.

ESTIMATED TOPIC COMPLETION TIME		
1-2 hours per Topic	2-4 hours per Topic	> 4 hours per Topic
Allergic Rhinitis, Cough & Cold	Acute & Critical Care Medicine	Anticoagulation
Alzheimer's Disease	Acute Coronary Syndromes	Biostatistics
Anemia	ADHD	Calculations II
Anxiety Disorders	Arrhythmias	Calculations III
Basic Science Concepts	Asthma	Calculations IV
Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia (BPH)	Calculations I	Common Skin Conditions
Bipolar Disorder	Calculations V	Diabetes
Common Conditions of the Eyes & Ears	Chronic Heart Failure	Dyslipidemia
Constipation & Diarrhea	Compounding with Hazardous Drugs	HIV
COPD	Contraception & Infertility	Infectious Diseases I
Cystic Fibrosis	Depression	Infectious Diseases II
Drug Allergies & Adverse Drug Reactions	Dietary Supplements, Natural & Complementary Medicine	Oncology
Drug Formulations & Patient Counseling	Drug Interactions	Osteoporosis, Menopause & Testosterone Use
Drug References	GERD & PUD	Pain
Drug Use in Pregnancy & Lactation	Hepatitis & Liver Disease	Seizures/Epilepsy
Gout	Hypertension	Systemic Steroids & Autoimmune Conditions
Infectious Diseases IV	Immunizations	
Intravenous Medication Principles	Infectious Diseases III	
Migraine	Inflammatory Bowel Disease	
Motion Sickness	Lab Values & Drug Monitoring	
Parkinson Disease	Medication Safety & Quality Improvement	
Patient Care & Professional Practice	Nonsterile Compounding	
Pediatric Conditions	Pharmacokinetics	
Pharmacogenomics	Renal Disease	
Pulmonary Arterial Hypertension	Schizophrenia/Psychosis	
Sexual Dysfunction	Sterile Compounding	
Sickle Cell Disease	Transplant	
Sleep Disorders		
Stable Angina		
Stroke		
Thyroid Disorders		
Tobacco Cessation		
Toxicology & Antidotes		
Travelers		
Urinary Incontinence		
Weight Loss		

TIPS FOR STUDYING

STUDYING CLINICAL CHAPTERS

- If you know a topic well, review the course book chapter quickly with a focus on bolded drugs, underlined information, Study Tip Gals and Key Drugs Guys. Then proceed to the QBank.
- If you are not confident with a topic, you will need to review it before proceeding to the QBank. Read the chapter, or watch the video lecture while following along with the chapter. Highlight the information you will need to review and review it before attempting the questions in the QBank.
- After completing the QBank questions on a topic, review any questions you answered incorrectly. Use the available QBank tools to make flashcards or notes for content you want to revisit later.

STUDYING CALCULATIONS

Math is an important part of the exam, and calculations are best mastered through repetition. Start by completing the Calculations chapters in the course book, then move on to the QBank. There are five Calculations chapters. Calculations I, II, III and IV can be completed in any order. The last Calculations chapter (Calculations V) contains exam-style math practice; review this chapter after the other four have been completed.

Other calculations are found in the biostatistics and pharmacokinetics chapters, as well as select clinical chapters (e.g., corrected phenytoin in Seizures/ Epilepsy, insulin math in Diabetes).

Use the Required Formulas Sheet (found in the quick guides and the end of the course book) while you are learning. Repeat each calculation questions in the QBank until you can do them all quickly and accurately.

As your scores improve, shift to completing the QBanks without using the Required Formulas Sheet. Turn off "Tutor" mode so you can assess your timing. The goal is to complete each question in ~1 minute and 36 seconds to mimic timing on the NAPLEX.

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

The formulas on the Required Formulas Sheet must be memorized. To assess what you know, take the Required Formulas Practice Test and check off items on the Required Formulas List (see book table of contents) once you have memorized the formula.

INTEGRATING CONTENT

At any point in your studies, you can create integrated tests in the QBank by mixing questions from multiple chapters (including calculations). Using this feature can increase engagement and retention, and it makes your studies more challenging, as you will not know what chapter a question is coming from on an individual test. This also better simulates what to expect on the NAPLEX. In addition, the QBank has helpful tools to assess your performance and quickly identify your most challenging areas; for details, see pharmacy.uworld.com.

ASSESSING READINESS FOR THE NAPLEX

You will know you are ready for the NAPLEX when the following conditions are met:

- Each calculation on the Required Formulas List is marked off, indicating the formula is memorized, and you are comfortable completing the math flawlessly and efficiently.
- All topics in the course book have been reviewed. Any topic can appear on the NAPLEX; skipping topics and taking a chance on the NAPLEX is not advised.
- All questions in the QBank show as "used" (indicating they are completed). All questions, especially those answered incorrectly, have been carefully reviewed and the concept is understood.

THE UWORLD RxPREP PRACTICE EXAM

Once you have completed your studies and feel prepared to take the NAPLEX, take the UWorld RxPrep Practice Exam (found under "Assessments"). The questions on this exam have been selected to align with the NAPLEX Content Outline (discussed in the next section).

The Practice Exam has 150 questions. To have the same time per question as the NAPLEX, it should be taken as a timed, 4-hour exam. Use a calculator only. Do not use your course book, notes or the Required Formula Sheet.

Evaluate your performance on the Practice Exam to determine your readiness to take the NAPLEX. If you feel ready, use your remaining time to review missed information from the Practice Exam and items that are easily forgotten, such as math (including clinical math, biostatistics and pharmacokinetics) and compounding. If you did not score well, you may need additional time to study.

THE NAPLEX CONTENT OUTLINE

The NAPLEX Content Outline is available on the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy (NABP) website at https://nabp.pharmacy. The Content Outline contains the blueprint (outline) of items tested on the NAPLEX, split into five domains. The table below shows the breakdown of the domains, but you are encouraged to read the complete Content Outline on the NABP website for more details.

DOMAIN	TITLE	CONTENTS	WEIGHT*
1	Foundational knowledge for pharmacy practice	■ Pharmaceutical science principles (e.g., pharmacology) ■ Calculations □ Patient parameters or laboratory measures, quantities of drugs to dispense, administer or compound, dose conversions, drug concentrations, rates of administration, biostatistical or pharmacoeconomic measures, pharmacokinetic parameters ■ Compounding (nonsterile and sterile preparations) ■ Drug development processes ■ Biostatistics and research design principles ■ Primary, secondary and tertiary resources	25% (~50 questions)
2	Medication use process	■ Interpreting prescriptions and medication orders ■ Therapeutic substitutions ■ Immunization services ■ Medication handling, stability, storage and disposal	25% (~50 questions)
3	Person-centered assessment and treatment planning	■ Medication history, allergy history and reconciliation ■ Health histories, screenings and assessments ■ Patient health conditions □ Signs/symptoms of conditions, pathophysiology, appropriateness of therapy, adverse drug reactions ■ Therapeutic monitoring and modifications ■ Patient education ■ OTC medications and dietary supplements ■ Devices to administer medications and self-monitoring	40% (~80 questions)
4	Professional practice	■ Reporting adverse drug events and medication errors ■ Public health initiatives and social determinants of health ■ Ethical considerations	5% (~10 questions)
5	Pharmacy management and leadership	■ Pharmacy operations (e.g., medication safety, technology) ■ Inventory and supply management (e.g., drug recalls) ■ Quality improvement activities ■ Mentorship and preceptorship	5% (~10 questions)

**Percentages and numbers of questions correspond to the 200 scored questions on the exam (i.e., does not include pretest questions).*

THE FORMAT OF THE NAPLEX

The NAPLEX is a 6-hour exam with 225 questions. Of these, 200 questions are used to determine the exam result (pass or fail). The other 25 questions are pretest questions that are being evaluated for inclusion on future exams. Pretest questions are interspersed throughout the exam; it is not possible to identify them.

- The majority of the questions (including calculations) are asked in a case-based format (such as patient profiles with an accompanying question). There are also stand-alone questions without a case.
- All questions must be answered in the order they are presented. You cannot skip questions or go back to a question at a later time.

The computer screen will display a prompt for two optional 10-minute breaks; these do not count towards the 6-hour time limit. Any other non-scheduled breaks that you request will be subtracted from the total time.

QUESTION TYPES

The NABP website includes samples of three question types that may be encountered on the NAPLEX:

- Multiple-Choice: select the one correct answer.
- Multiple-Response: select all of the correct responses and no incorrect response for credit.
- Constructed-Response: enter the answer using the computer keyboard (usually for math problems).

There are two additional question types in the UWorld RxPrep QBank (as these were historically tested on NAPLEX and are good for learning the material):

- Ordered-Response: put the items in order.
- Hot Spot: identify the correct area on a diagram.

CALCULATORS

- Personal calculators are not permitted during the exam. The Pearson VUE testing center dashboard uses an on-screen calculator that is similar to the Texas Instruments TI-30XS Multiview and other comparable hand-held, non-graphing calculators. The on-screen calculator can be opened in a pop-up window during the exam at any time.
- Pearson VUE offers a demo test on their website, available at: home.pearsonvue.com/nabp.
- A candidate requesting a handheld calculator will be given a basic, non-scientific calculator. Some calculations may require the use of the on-screen calculator (e.g., order of operands, exponents).

ARRIVAL DETAILS, TUTORIAL

On exam day, arrive at least 30 minutes prior to your appointment for check-in procedures (ID verification, digital signature and photograph). Review the Candidate Application Bulletin on the NABP website for details on acceptable forms of ID, prohibited items and exam misconduct.

- If you arrive more than 30 minutes after your scheduled appointment and are refused admission to sit for the exam, you will be required to forfeit your appointment.
- Take the online exam tutorial before starting the exam; it will explain how to navigate the cases, enter answers, etc. The tutorial is important and does not take away from your test time.

PHARMACY LAW EXAMS

MPJE®

Many people study for the MPJE after the NAPLEX has been completed. There is little overlap between the NAPLEX and MPJE.

Depending on prior knowledge and work experience, MPJE preparation will take about 2 – 5 weeks. The UWorld RxPrep MPJE course and state-specific flashcard decks will provide the content to do well.

CPJE

Unlike the MPJE, the law exam in California (the CPJE), contains clinical content that overlaps with the NAPLEX. The UWorld RxPrep course book includes the topics that overlap with the CPJE (Medication Safety, Infectious Diseases, Immunizations, HIV, others). The clinical topics not covered on the NAPLEX that are tested on the CPJE are included in the separate CPJE course (e.g., furnishing drugs). California law is covered fully in the CPJE course.

Best wishes for your exam preparation,

The UWorld RxPrep Pharmacy Team

REQUIRED FORMULAS

Calculations

Liquid (Volume) Conversions p. 124
1 tsp (t) = 5 mL, 1 tbsp (T) = 15 mL
1 fl oz = 30 mL
1 cup = 8 oz, 240 mL
1 pint = 16 oz, 480 mL
1 quart = 2 pints, 960 mL
1 gallon = 4 quarts, 3,840 mL

Solid (Weight) Conversions p. 124
1 kg = 2.2 pounds (lbs)
1 oz = 28.4 grams (g)
1 lb = 454 g, 16 oz
1 grain = 65 mg
mEq to mmol is 1:1 for monovalent ions, 1:0.5 for divalent ions

Height Conversions p. 124
1 inch (in) = 2.54 centimeters (cm)
1 meter (m) = 100 cm

Percentage Strength p. 137

$$\%\ w/v = \frac{X\ g}{100\ mL} \qquad \%\ v/v = \frac{X\ mL}{100\ mL} \qquad \%\ w/w = \frac{X\ g}{100\ g}$$

Ratio Strength p. 141
Percentage strength = 100 / Ratio strength
Ratio strength = 100 / Percentage strength

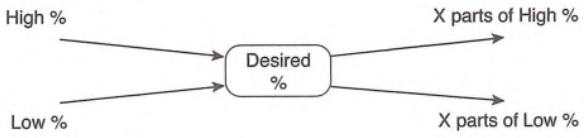
Parts Per Million (PPM) p. 143
PPM → Percentage strength Move the decimal left 4 places
Percentage strength → PPM Move the decimal right 4 places

Specific Gravity (SG) p. 144

$$SG = \frac{\text{weight of substance (g)}}{\text{weight of equal volume of water (g)}} \text{ or } SG = \frac{g}{mL}$$

Dilution & Concentration (Changing Strength or Quantity) p. 145
$Q1 \times C1 = Q2 \times C2$ Q1 = old quantity Q2 = new quantity
C1 = old concentration C2 = new concentration

Alligation p. 146



Use proportions to calculate amount of high % and/or low % required

Osmolarity p. 150

$$mOsmol/L = \frac{\text{Wt of substance (g/L)}}{\text{MW (g/mole)}} \times (\#\ \text{of particles}) \times 1{,}000$$

Isotonicity (E Value) p. 153

$$E = \frac{(58.5)(i)}{(\text{MW of drug})(1.8)}$$

Moles and Millimoles p. 155

$$mols = \frac{g}{MW} \text{ or } mmols = \frac{mg}{MW}$$

Milliequivalents p. 157

$$mEq = \frac{mg \times valence}{MW} \text{ or } mEq = mmols \times valence$$

Enteral Nutrition Calories p. 164
Carbs, Protein = 4 kcal/gram Fat = 9 kcal/gram

Parenteral Nutrition Calories p. 164
Dextrose monohydrate = 3.4 kcal/gram ILE 10% = 1.1 kcal/mL
Amino acid solutions = 4 kcal/gram ILE 20% = 2 kcal/mL
ILE 30% = 3 kcal/mL

Determining Fluid Needs p. 162
When weight > 20 kg: 1,500 mL + (20 mL)(weight in kg – 20)
Can estimate using 30-40 mL/kg/day

Total Energy Expenditure p. 163
TEE = BEE x activity factor x stress factor

Grams of Nitrogen From Protein p. 165

$$\text{Nitrogen (g)} = \frac{\text{protein intake (g)}}{6.25}$$

Corrected Calcium for Albumin < 3.5 (not needed with ionized Ca) p. 172
$Ca_{corrected}$ (mg/dL) = $calcium_{reported(serum)}$ + [(4.0 – albumin) × (0.8)]

Body Mass Index (BMI) p. 183

$$BMI\ (kg/m^2) = \frac{\text{weight (kg)}}{[\text{height (m)}]^2} \text{ or } \frac{\text{weight (lbs)}}{[\text{height (inches)}]^2} \times 703$$

Ideal Body Weight (IBW) p. 184
IBW (males) = 50 kg + (2.3 kg)(number of inches over 5 feet)
IBW (females) = 45.5 kg + (2.3 kg)(number of inches over 5 feet)

Adjusted Body Weight ($AdjBW_{0.4}$) p. 184
$AdjBW_{0.4} = IBW + 0.4(TBW – IBW)$

Which Weight to Use for Drug Dosing (mg/kg) p. 184

All drugs (if underweight)	Total Body Weight (TBW)
Most drugs (if normal weight or obese)	TBW
Exceptions	
Acyclovir, Aminophylline, Levothyroxine, Theophylline (normal weight, obese)	IBW
Aminoglycosides (obese)	$AdjBW_{0.4}$

Flow Rates/Drop Factor (drops/min) p. 185 & p. 190

$$\frac{\#\ drops}{mL} \times \frac{mL}{hr} \times \frac{hr}{60\ min} = \frac{\#\ drops}{min}$$

Dehydration p. 192
BUN:SCr > 20:1

Cockcroft-Gault Equation p. 193

$$\text{CrCl (mL/min)} = \frac{140 - (\text{age of patient})}{72 \times SCr} \times \text{weight (kg) (} \times 0.85 \text{ if female)}$$

Arterial Blood Gas (ABG) p. 195
ABG: pH/pCO_2/pO_2/HCO_3/O_2 Sat
1. pH < 7.35 → acidosis, pH > 7.45 → alkalosis
2. Respiratory: pCO_2 < 35 → alkalosis, pCO_2 > 45 → acidosis
   Metabolic: HCO_3 > 26 → alkalosis, HCO_3 < 22 → acidosis
3. Which abnormal value (pCO_2 or HCO_3) matches the pH from Step #1?
   Ex: ↓ pH + ↑ pCO_2 → respiratory acidosis
   Ex: ↓ pH + ↓ HCO_3 → metabolic acidosis

Anion Gap p. 197
Anion gap (AG) = Na – Cl – HCO_3

pH Calculations p. 198
Weak acid: $pH = pK_a + \log\left[\frac{salt}{acid}\right]$
Weak base: $pH = pK_a + \log\left[\frac{base}{salt}\right]$

Percent Ionization p. 200
Weak acid: $\%\ ionization = \frac{100}{1+10^{(pKa-pH)}}$
Weak base: $\%\ ionization = \frac{100}{1+10^{(pH-pKa)}}$

Absolute Neutrophil Count (ANC) p. 203
ANC (cells/mm^3) = WBC × [(% segs + % bands)/100]

Patient Care & Professional Practice

Temperature Conversions (Fahrenheit ↔ Celsius) p. 112
°C = (°F – 32)/1.8 °F = (°C × 1.8) + 32

Common Skin Conditions

Time to Burn (TTB) p. 623
TTB (with sunscreen in min) = SPF × TTB (without sunscreen)

Biostatistics

Mean, Median and Mode p. 222

Mean - average value
Median - value in the middle of an ordered list
Mode - value that occurs most frequently

Risk, Relative Risk (RR) p. 228, Relative Risk Reduction (RRR) p. 229, Absolute Risk Reduction (ARR) p. 230

$$\text{Risk} = \frac{\text{Number of subjects in group with an unfavorable event}}{\text{Total number of subjects in group}}$$

$$\text{RR} = \frac{\text{Risk in treatment group}}{\text{Risk in control group}}$$

$$\text{RRR} = \frac{(\%\text{ risk in control group} - \%\text{ risk in treatment group})}{\%\text{ risk in the control group}}$$

ARR = (% risk in control group) – (% risk in treatment group)

Number Needed to Treat or Harm (NNT, NNH) p. 231-232

$$\text{NNT or NNH} = \frac{1}{\text{ARR}^*}$$

*expressed as decimal

Odds Ratio (OR) p. 233

Exposure	Outcome Present	Outcome Absent
Present	A	B
Absent	C	D

$$\text{OR} = \frac{AD}{BC}$$

Hazard Ratio (HR) p. 233

$$\text{HR} = \frac{\text{Hazard rate in the treatment group}}{\text{Hazard rate in the control group}}$$

Incremental Cost-Effectiveness Ratio p. 246

$$\text{Incremental cost ratio} = \frac{(C_2 - C_1)}{(E_2 - E_1)}$$

C = costs, E = effects

Tobacco Cessation

Pack-Year Smoking History p. 668

Pack-year smoking history = Cigarette packs / day × years smoked

Diabetes

Initiating Basal-Bolus Insulin in Type 1 Diabetes p. 690

1. Calculate total daily dose (TDD) of 0.5 units/kg/day using TBW.
2. Divide into 1/2 basal & 1/2 rapid-acting.
3. Split rapid-acting among meals.

Insulin-to-Carbohydrate Ratio: Rule of 450 for Regular Insulin p. 692

$$\frac{450}{\text{total daily dose of insulin (TDD)}} = \text{grams of carbohydrate covered by 1 unit of regular insulin}$$

Insulin-to-Carbohydrate Ratio: Rule of 500 for Rapid-Acting Insulin p. 692

$$\frac{500}{\text{total daily dose of insulin (TDD)}} = \text{grams of carbohydrate covered by 1 unit of rapid-acting insulin}$$

Correction Factor: 1,500 Rule for Regular Insulin p. 693

$$\frac{1{,}500}{\text{total daily dose of insulin (TDD)}} = \text{correction factor for 1 unit of regular insulin}$$

Correction Factor: 1,800 Rule for Rapid-Acting Insulin p. 693

$$\frac{1{,}800}{\text{total daily dose of insulin (TDD)}} = \text{correction factor for 1 unit of rapid-acting insulin}$$

Correction Dose p. 693

$$\frac{(\text{blood glucose now}) - (\text{target blood glucose})}{\text{correction factor}} = \text{correction dose}$$

Dyslipidemia

Friedewald Equation p. 457

$$\text{LDL} = \text{TC} - \text{HDL} - \frac{\text{TG}^*}{5}$$

*do not use if TG > 400

Nonsterile Compounding

Minimum Weighable Quantity (MWQ) p. 253

$$\text{MWQ} = \frac{\text{Sensitivity requirement}}{\text{Acceptable error rate (usually 0.05)}}$$

Oncology

Body Surface Area (Mosteller) p. 895
(review use of Du Bois and Du Bois)

$$\text{BSA (m}^2\text{)} = \sqrt{\frac{\text{Ht (cm)} \times \text{Wt (kg)}}{3{,}600}}$$

Pharmacokinetics

Bioavailability (F) p. 1076

$$F\,(\%) = 100 \times \frac{AUC_{extravascular}}{AUC_{intravenous}} \times \frac{Dose_{intravenous}}{Dose_{extravascular}}$$

Volume of Distribution (Vd) p. 1078

$$\text{Vd} = \frac{\text{Amount of drug in body}}{\text{Concentration of drug in plasma}}$$

Clearance p. 1080 & p. 1082

$$\text{Cl} = \frac{F \times \text{dose}}{AUC} \quad \text{or} \quad \text{Cl} = ke \times Vd$$

Elimination Rate Constant (ke) p. 1082

$$ke = \frac{\text{Cl}}{\text{Vd}}$$

Predicting Drug Concentrations p. 1082

$$C_2 = C_1 \times e^{-kt} \qquad ke = \frac{\ln (C_1 / C_2)}{t}$$

Half-Life ($t_{½}$) p. 1083

$$t_{½} = \frac{0.693}{ke}$$

Loading Dose (LD) p. 1085

$$\text{LD} = \frac{\text{Desired concentration} \times Vd}{F}$$

Acute & Critical Care Medicine

Mean Arterial Pressure (MAP) p. 805

MAP = [(2 × diastolic pressure) + systolic pressure] / 3

Seizures/Epilepsy

Phenytoin (Total) Correction for Albumin < 3.5 p. 1003

$$\text{Phenytoin}_{corrected}\ (\text{mcg/mL}) = \frac{\text{Total phenytoin measured}}{(0.2 \times \text{albumin}) + 0.1}$$

DRUG-DOSE CONVERSIONS

KCl Solution (Oral) to Tablets p. 158 (see problem #61)
KCl 10% = 20 mEq/15 mL

Calcium Salts p. 201
Calcium carbonate = 40% elemental calcium
Calcium citrate = 21% elemental calcium

Aminophylline ↔ Theophylline p. 202
Aminophylline to Theophylline: Multiply by 0.8 (remember: **ATM**)
Theophylline to Aminophylline: Divide by 0.8

Statins p. 460

Pitavastatin	2 mg	Lovastatin	40 mg
Rosuvastatin	5 mg	Pravastatin	40 mg
Atorvastatin	10 mg	Fluvastatin	80 mg
Simvastatin	20 mg		

Metoprolol p. 483
IV:PO = 1:2.5

Loop Diuretics p. 515

Ethacrynic acid	50 mg	Bumetanide	1 mg
Furosemide	40 mg	Furosemide	IV:PO = 1:2
Torsemide	20 mg	Other Loops	IV:PO = 1:1

Insulin p. 694
Usually, 1:1 conversion
Exceptions:
NPH dosed BID → glargine dosed daily, use 80% of NPH dose
Toujeo → other forms of glargine, use 80% of *Toujeo* dose

Levothyroxine p. 706
IV:PO = 0.75:1

Steroids p. 713

Cortisone	25 mg	Methylprednisolone	4 mg
Hydrocortisone	20 mg	Triamcinolone	4 mg
Prednisone	5 mg	Dexamethasone	0.75 mg
Prednisolone	5 mg	Betamethasone	0.6 mg

Opioids (methodology) p. 860

Lithium p. 953
5 mL lithium citrate syrup = 300 mg lithium carbonate = 8 mEq Li^+ ion

TOP PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

Top-selling/must-know prescription drugs are included in this list and bolded throughout the course book. Refer to the clinical chapters for essential underlined information about them. These are oral formulations unless otherwise noted. Top prescription drugs that are injectable only and top OTC medications are listed separately. Note that some prescription medications are also available OTC (see Top OTC Drugs list).

DRUG	BRAND NAME
Abacavir	
Abacavir/ Lamivudine	*Epzicom*
Acetaminophen	*Tylenol* (oral), generics (suppository, injection)
Acetaminophen/ Codeine	
Acyclovir	*Zovirax* (topical), generics (oral, injection)
Adapalene	*Differin* (topical)
Albuterol	*ProAir HFA, ProAir RespiClick, Proventil HFA, Ventolin HFA* (inhalation)
Albuterol/ Ipratropium	*Combivent Respimat* (inhalation)
Alendronate	*Fosamax*
Allopurinol	*Zyloprim* (oral), *Aloprim* (injection)
Alprazolam	*Xanax*
Alvimopan	*Entereg*
Amiodarone	*Pacerone* (oral), *Nexterone* (injection)
Amitriptyline	
Amlodipine	*Norvasc*
Amlodipine/ Benazepril	*Lotrel*
Amoxicillin	
Amoxicillin/ Clavulanate	*Augmentin*
Amphetamine/ Dextroamphetamine	*Adderall*
Ampicillin	Generics (oral, injection)
Anastrozole	*Arimidex*
Apixaban	*Eliquis*

DRUG	BRAND NAME
Aprepitant	*Emend*
Aripiprazole	*Abilify*
Atazanavir	*Reyataz*
Atenolol	*Tenormin*
Atenolol/ Chlorthalidone	*Tenoretic*
Atogepant	*Qulipta*
Atomoxetine	*Strattera*
Atorvastatin	*Lipitor*
Azelastine	*Astepro* (nasal), generics (ophthalmic)
Azithromycin	*Zithromax* (oral, injection), *Z-Pak* (oral)
Bacitracin/ Neomycin/ Polymyxin B/ Hydrocortisone	*Cortisporin* (topical)
Baclofen	*Lioresal* (intrathecal), generics (oral)
Baloxavir marboxil	*Xofluza*
Beclomethasone	*QVAR RediHaler* (inhalation)
Benazepril	*Lotensin*
Benzonatate	*Tessalon Perles*
Benztropine	
Betamethasone dipropionate	Generics (topical)
Betamethasone/ Clotrimazole	Generics (topical)
Bictegravir/ Emtricitabine/ Tenofovir alafenamide	*Biktarvy*
Bimatoprost	*Lumigan, Latisse* (ophthalmic)
Bisoprolol/ Hydrochlorothiazide	*Ziac*
Brompheniramine/ Pseudoephedrine/ Dextromethorphan	*Bromfed DM*

DRUG	BRAND NAME
Budesonide	*Pulmicort, Pulmicort Flexhaler* (inhalation), *Entocort EC, Uceris* (oral)
Budesonide/ Formoterol	*Symbicort, Breyna* (inhalation)
Bumetanide	*Bumex* (oral), generics (injection)
Buprenorphine	*Belbuca* (buccal film), *Butrans* (patch)
Buprenorphine/ Naloxone	*Suboxone* (SL film), *Zubsolv* (SL tablet)
Bupropion	*Wellbutrin SR, Wellbutrin XL*
Buspirone	
Butoconazole	*Gynazole-1* (topical)
Calcitonin	*Miacalcin* (injection), generics (nasal)
Canagliflozin	*Invokana*
Canagliflozin/ Metformin	*Invokamet*
Cannabidiol	*Epidiolex*
Capecitabine	*Xeloda*
Carbamazepine	*Tegretol*
Carbidopa/ Levodopa	*Sinemet*
Cariprazine	*Vraylar*
Carisoprodol	*Soma*
Carvedilol	*Coreg, Coreg CR*
Cefdinir	
Cefuroxime	Generics (oral, injection)
Celecoxib	*Celebrex*
Cephalexin	
Chlorpheniramine/ Hydrocodone	*TussiCaps*

Top Prescription Drugs Continued

DRUG	BRAND NAME
Chlorthalidone	
Cholecalciferol, vitamin D3	
Cinacalcet	*Sensipar*
Ciprofloxacin	*Cipro* (oral), generics (injection)
Ciprofloxacin/ Dexamethasone	*Ciprodex* (otic)
Citalopram	*Celexa*
Clarithromycin	
Clindamycin	*Cleocin* (injection, oral), *Cleocin-T, Clindagel* (topical)
Clobetasol	*Clobex, Temovate, Olux* (topical)
Clonazepam	*Klonopin*
Clonidine	*Kapvay* (oral), *Catapres-TTS* (patch)
Clopidogrel	*Plavix*
Clozapine	*Clozaril*
Cobicistat	*Tybost*
Codeine	
Codeine/ Promethazine	
Colchicine	*Colcrys*
Colesevelam	*Welchol*
Cyanocobalamin, vitamin B12	Generics (injection, nasal)
Cyclobenzaprine	*Amrix, Fexmid*
Cyclophosphamide	Generics (oral, injection)
Cyclosporine	*Neoral, Gengraf* (modified; oral) *Sandimmune* (non-modified; oral, injection), *Restasis* (ophthalmic)
Dabigatran	*Pradaxa*
Dapagliflozin	*Farxiga*
Darunavir	*Prezista*
Darunavir/ Cobicistat/ Emtricitabine/ Tenofovir alafenamide	*Symtuza*
Desvenlafaxine	*Pristiq*
Dexamethasone	Generics (oral, injection)
Dexlansoprazole	*Dexilant*
Dextromethorphan/ Promethazine	
Diazepam	*Valium* (oral), *Diastat AcuDial* (rectal gel), generics (injection)
Diclofenac	*Voltaren* (topical), generics (oral, patch)
Diclofenac/ Misoprostol	*Arthrotec*
Dicyclomine	*Bentyl*
Digoxin	*Lanoxin* (oral, injection)
Dihydroergotamine	*D.H.E. 45* (injection), *Migranal* (nasal)
Diltiazem	*Tiazac, Cardizem* (oral), generics (injection)
Diphenhydramine	*Benadryl* (oral, topical, injection)
Diphenoxylate/ Atropine	*Lomotil*
Dipyridamole/ Aspirin	*Aggrenox*
Dolutegravir	*Tivicay*
Dolutegravir/ Abacavir/ Lamivudine	*Triumeq*
Dolutegravir/ Lamivudine	*Dovato*
Donepezil	*Aricept* (oral), *Adlarity* (patch)
Donepezil/ Memantine	*Namzaric*
Doravirine	*Pifeltro*
Doravirine/ Lamivudine/ Tenofovir disoproxil fumarate	*Delstrigo*
Dornase alfa	*Pulmozyme* (inhalation)
Doxazosin	*Cardura*
Doxepin	
Doxycycline	*Vibramycin* (oral), generics (injection)
Dronabinol	*Marinol*
Drospirenone	*Slynd*
Duloxetine	*Cymbalta*
Efavirenz	
Elvitegravir/ Cobicistat/ Emtricitabine/ Tenofovir alafenamide	*Genvoya*
Elvitegravir/ Cobicistat/ Emtricitabine/ Tenofovir disoproxil fumarate	*Stribild*
Empagliflozin	*Jardiance*
Emtricitabine	
Emtricitabine/ Tenofovir alafenamide	*Descovy*
Emtricitabine/ Tenofovir disoproxil fumarate	*Truvada*
Enalapril	*Vasotec*
Entecavir	*Baraclude*
Ergocalciferol, vitamin D2	*Calciferol*
Erythromycin	*E.E.S., Ery-Tab* (oral), *Erythrocin* (oral, injection)
Escitalopram	*Lexapro*
Esomeprazole	*Nexium, Nexium 24HR* (oral), *Nexium IV* (injection)
Estradiol	*Estrace* (vaginal cream), *Estring* (vaginal ring), *Vagifem* (vaginal tablet), *Vivelle-Dot, Climara* (patch)
Estrogens, conjugated (equine)	*Premarin* (vaginal cream, oral, injection)
Estrogens, conjugated (equine)/ Medroxyprogesterone	
Eszopiclone	*Lunesta*
Ethinyl estradiol/ Drospirenone	*Yasmin, Yaz*
Ethinyl estradiol/ Etonogestrel	*NuvaRing* (vaginal ring)
Ethinyl estradiol/ Levonorgestrel	*Seasonique*

Top Prescription Drugs Continued

DRUG	BRAND NAME
Ethinyl estradiol/ Norelgestromin	*Xulane* (patch)
Ethinyl estradiol/ Norethindrone	*Junel, Loestrin, Lo Loestrin, Microgestin*
Ethinyl estradiol/ Norgestimate	*Tri-Sprintec, Sprintec 28*
Ethosuximide	*Zarontin*
Ezetimibe	*Zetia*
Famotidine	*Pepcid* (oral, injection), *Zantac 360*
Fenofibrate	*Tricor, Trilipix*
Fentanyl	*Sublimaze* (injection), generics (patch)
Fidaxomicin	*Dificid*
Finasteride	*Proscar, Propecia*
Fluconazole	*Diflucan* (oral, injection)
Fluocinonide	*Vanos* (topical)
Fluoxetine	*Prozac*
Fluticasone	*Arnuity Ellipta* (inhalation)
Fluticasone/ Salmeterol	*Advair Diskus, Advair HFA* (inhalation)
Fluticasone/ Vilanterol	*Breo Ellipta* (inhalation)
Formoterol	Inhalation
Furosemide	*Lasix* (oral), generics (injection)
Gabapentin	*Neurontin*
Gemfibrozil	*Lopid*
Glecaprevir/ Pibrentasvir	*Mavyret*
Glimepiride	*Amaryl*
Glipizide	
Glyburide	
Glyburide, micronized	*Glynase*
Glycopyrrolate/ Formoterol/ Budesonide	*Breztri Aerosphere* (inhalation)
Granisetron	*Sancuso* (patch), generics (injection, oral)
Guanfacine ER	*Intuniv*
Haloperidol	Generics (oral, injection)
Hydralazine	Generics (oral, injection)
Hydralazine/ Isosorbide dinitrate	*BiDil*
Hydrochlorothiazide	
Hydrocodone/ Acetaminophen	
Hydrocortisone	*Solu-Cortef* (injection), generics (oral)
Hydromorphone	*Dilaudid* (oral, injection)
Hydroxychloroquine	*Plaquenil*
Hydroxyurea	
Hydroxyzine	*Vistaril*
Ibandronate	Generics (oral, injection)
Ibuprofen	*Advil, Motrin IB*
Icosapent ethyl	*Vascepa*
Imatinib	*Gleevec*
Indomethacin	*Indocin* (oral, injection, suppository)
Influenza vaccine, live attenuated (LAIV4)	*FluMist Quadrivalent* (nasal)
Ipratropium bromide	*Atrovent HFA* (inhalation)
Irbesartan	*Avapro*
Isocarboxazid	*Marplan*
Isoniazid (INH)	
Isosorbide mononitrate	
Isotretinoin	*Absorica, Amnesteem*
Ketoconazole	Generics (oral, topical)
Ketorolac	Generics (oral, injection, nasal), *Acular* (ophthalmic)
Labetalol	Generics (oral, injection)
Lacosamide	*Vimpat* (oral, injection)
Lactulose	
Lamivudine	
Lamotrigine	*Lamictal, Lamictal ODT, Lamictal Starter Kit*
Lansoprazole	*Prevacid, Prevacid SoluTab*
Latanoprost	*Xalatan, Xelpros* (ophthalmic)
Levetiracetam	*Keppra* (oral, injection)
Levofloxacin	Generics (oral, injection)
Levothyroxine	*Levoxyl, Synthroid, Unithroid* (oral), generics (injection)
Lidocaine	*Lidoderm* (patch), generics (oral solution, topical)
Linaclotide	*Linzess*
Linagliptin	*Tradjenta*
Linezolid	*Zyvox* (oral, injection)
Liothyronine	*Cytomel*
Lisdexamfetamine	*Vyvanse*
Lisinopril	*Zestril*
Lisinopril/ Hydrochlorothiazide	*Zestoretic*
Lithium	*Lithobid*
Lorazepam	*Ativan* (oral, injection)
Losartan	*Cozaar*
Losartan/ Hydrochlorothiazide	*Hyzaar*
Lovastatin	*Altoprev*
Lubiprostone	*Amitiza*
Lurasidone	*Latuda*
Medroxyprogesterone	*Provera* (oral), *Depo-Provera* (injection)
Meloxicam	*Mobic*
Memantine	*Namenda*
Meperidine	*Demerol* (oral, injection)
Mesalamine	*Asacol HD, Pentasa* (oral), *Canasa* (suppository), *Rowasa* (enema)
Metformin	*Fortamet, Glumetza*
Metformin/ Pioglitazone	*Actoplus Met*
Metformin/ Sitagliptin	*Janumet*
Methadone	
Methimazole	

Top Prescription Drugs Continued

DRUG	BRAND NAME
Methocarbamol	*Robaxin*
Methotrexate	*Trexall* (oral), *Otrexup, Rasuvo* (injection)
Methylnaltrexone	*Relistor* (oral, injection)
Methylphenidate	*Concerta, Ritalin, Ritalin LA* (oral), *Daytrana* (patch)
Methylprednisolone	*Medrol* (oral), *Solu-Medrol* (injection)
Metoclopramide	*Reglan* (oral), generics (injection)
Metoprolol succinate ER	*Toprol XL*
Metoprolol tartrate IR	*Lopressor* (oral), generics (injection)
Metronidazole	*Flagyl* (oral, injection)
Minocycline	*Solodyn* (oral), *Minocin* (oral, injection)
Mirtazapine	*Remeron, Remeron SolTab*
Mometasone	Generics (topical)
Mometasone/ Formoterol	*Dulera* (inhalation)
Montelukast	*Singulair*
Morphine	*MS Contin* (oral), *Duramorph, Infumorph* (injection)
Moxifloxacin	*Vigamox* (ophthalmic), generics (oral, injection)
Mupirocin	Generics (topical)
Mycophenolate mofetil	*CellCept* (oral, injection)
Mycophenolic acid	*Myfortic*
N-acetylcysteine	*Acetadote* (injection), generics (oral)
Nabilone	*Cesamet*
Nadolol	*Corgard*
Naloxegol	*Movantik*
Naloxone	*Narcan, RiVive* (nasal), generics (injection)
Naproxen	*Aleve*
Naproxen/ Esomeprazole	*Vimovo*
Nebivolol	*Bystolic*
Neomycin/ Polymyxin B/ Dexamethasone	*Maxitrol* (ophthalmic)
Niacin	
Nifedipine ER	*Procardia XL*
Nitrofurantoin	*Macrobid, Macrodantin*
Nitroglycerin	*Nitro-BID* (ointment), *Nitrostat* (SL tablet), *Nitrolingual, NitroMist* (SL spray), generics (injection)
Norethindrone	*Errin, Camila, Nora-BE*
Nortriptyline	*Pamelor*
Ofloxacin	*Ocuflox* (ophthalmic)
Olanzapine	*Zyprexa*
Olmesartan	*Benicar*
Olmesartan/ Hydrochlorothiazide	*Benicar HCT*
Olodaterol/ Tiotropium	*Stiolto Respimat* (inhalation)
Olopatadine	*Pataday* (ophthalmic)
Omega-3 fatty acids	*Lovaza*
Omeprazole	*Prilosec, Prilosec OTC*
Ondansetron	*Zofran* (oral), generics (injection)
Orlistat	*Xenical, Alli*
Oseltamivir	*Tamiflu*
Oxcarbazepine	*Trileptal*
Oxybutynin	*Ditropan XL* (oral), *Oxytrol, Oxytrol for Women* (patch)
Oxycodone	*Oxycontin* (ER; oral), *Roxicodone* (IR; oral)
Oxycodone/ Acetaminophen	*Percocet, Endocet*
Paliperidone	*Invega*
Pancrelipase	*Creon, Viokace, Zenpep*
Pantoprazole	*Protonix* (oral, injection)
Paroxetine	*Paxil*
Penicillin VK	
Phenazopyridine	*Pyridium*
Phenelzine	*Nardil*
Phenobarbital	Generics (oral, injection)
Phentermine	*Adipex-P*
Phenytoin	*Dilantin, Dilantin Infatabs* (oral), generics (oral, injection)
Pioglitazone	*Actos*
Polyethylene glycol 3350	*MiraLax*
Polyethylene glycol-electrolyte solution	*Colyte, GoLytely*
Polymyxin/ Trimethoprim	*Polytrim* (ophthalmic)
Posaconazole	*Noxafil* (oral, injection)
Potassium chloride	*Klor-Con, K-Tab, Micro-K* (oral), generics (oral, injection)
Pramipexole	*Mirapex ER*
Prasugrel	*Effient*
Pravastatin	
Prednisolone	*Millipred, Orapred ODT* (oral), *Pred Forte, Pred Mild* (ophthalmic)
Prednisone	
Pregabalin	*Lyrica*
Progesterone, micronized	*Prometrium*
Prochlorperazine	Generics (oral, injection)
Promethazine	Generics (oral, injection, suppository)
Propranolol	*Inderal LA, Inderal XL* (oral), generics (injection)
Propylthiouracil (PTU)	
Quetiapine	*Seroquel*
Quinapril	*Accupril*
Raloxifene	*Evista*
Raltegravir	*Isentress, Isentress HD*

Top Prescription Drugs Continued

DRUG	BRAND NAME
Ramipril	*Altace*
Rifampin	
Rifaximin	*Xifaxan*
Rilpivirine	
Rilpivirine/ Emtricitabine/ Tenofovir alafenamide	*Odefsey*
Rilpivirine/ Emtricitabine/ Tenofovir disoproxil fumarate	*Complera*
Rimegepant	*Nurtec*
Risperidone	*Risperdal*
Ritonavir	*Norvir*
Rivaroxaban	*Xarelto*
Rivastigmine	*Exelon* (patch), generics (oral)
Ropinirole	
Rosuvastatin	*Crestor*
Rotavirus 1 vaccine	*Rotarix*
Rotavirus 5 vaccine	*RotaTeq*
Sacubitril/ Valsartan	*Entresto*
Salmeterol	*Serevent Diskus* (inhalation)
Scopolamine	*Transderm Scop* (patch)
Selenium sulfide	*Selsun* (topical)
Sertraline	*Zoloft*
Sevelamer carbonate	*Renvela*
Sevelamer hydrochloride	*Renagel*
Sildenafil	*Viagra* (oral), *Revatio* (oral, injection)
Simvastatin	*Zocor*
Sitagliptin	*Januvia*
Sodium phosphates	*OsmoPrep* (oral), generics (injection)
Sodium polystyrene sulfonate	*SPS* (oral, enema)
Sodium/ Potassium/ Magnesium sulfate	*Suprep Bowel Prep Kit*
Sofosbuvir/ Velpatasvir	*Epclusa*
Solifenacin	*Vesicare*
Spironolactone	*Aldactone*
Sucralfate	*Carafate*
Sulfamethoxazole/ Trimethoprim	*Bactrim DS*, *Bactrim* (oral), generics (injection)
Sumatriptan	*Imitrex* (oral, injection, nasal), *Imitrex STATdose* (injection), *Onzetra Xsail* (nasal)
Sumatriptan/ Naproxen	*Treximet*
Tacrolimus	*Envarsus XR* (oral), *Prograf* (oral, injection)
Tadalafil	*Cialis, Adcirca*
Tamoxifen	
Tamsulosin	*Flomax*
Temazepam	*Restoril*
Tenofovir alafenamide	*Vemlidy*
Tenofovir disoproxil fumarate	*Viread*
Terazosin	
Terbinafine	Generics (oral)
Terconazole	Generics (topical, vaginal)
Testosterone	*AndroGel*, *AndroGel Pump* (topical)
Theophylline	
Thyroid, desiccated	*Armour Thyroid*
Ticagrelor	*Brilinta*
Timolol	*Timoptic, Istalol, Timoptic-XE* (ophthalmic)
Timolol/ Dorzolamide	*Cosopt, Cosopt PF* (ophthalmic)
Tiotropium	*Spiriva HandiHaler, Spiriva Respimat* (inhalation)
Tizanidine	*Zanaflex*
Tobramycin	Generics (inhalation, injection)
Tolterodine	*Detrol*
Tolvaptan	*Samsca*
Topiramate	*Topamax*
Torsemide	
Tramadol	
Tranexamic acid	Generics (oral, injection)
Tranylcypromine	*Parnate*
Travoprost	*Travatan Z* (ophthalmic)
Trazodone	
Tretinoin	*Atralin, Altreno, Renova, Retin-A, Retin-A Micro* (topical)
Triamcinolone	*Kenalog* (topical, injection)
Triamterene/ Hydrochlorothiazide	*Maxzide*
Ubrogepant	*Ubrelvy*
Ulipristal	*Ella*
Umeclidinium/ Vilanterol	*Anoro Ellipta* (inhalation)
Umeclidinium/ Vilanterol/ Fluticasone	*Trelegy Ellipta* (inhalation)
Valacyclovir	*Valtrex*
Valganciclovir	*Valcyte*
Valproic acid/ Divalproex	*Depakote, Depakote ER, Depakote Sprinkle*, (oral), generics (injection)
Valsartan	*Diovan*
Valsartan/ Amlodipine	*Exforge*
Valsartan/ Hydrochlorothiazide	*Diovan HCT*
Vancomycin	*Vancocin* (oral, injection)
Varenicline	
Venlafaxine	*Effexor XR*
Verapamil	*Calan SR*
Vitamin K, phytonadione	*Mephyton* (oral), generics (injection)
Voriconazole	*Vfend* (oral), *Vfend IV* (injection)
Warfarin	*Jantoven*
Zidovudine	Generics (oral, injection)
Ziprasidone	*Geodon* (oral, injection)
Zolpidem	*Ambien* (oral), *Edluar* (SL tablet)

TOP PRESCRIPTION DRUGS: INJECTABLE ONLY

Top-selling/must-know prescription drugs that are injectable only are included in this list and are bolded throughout the course book. Refer to the clinical chapters for essential underlined information about them.

DRUG	BRAND NAME
Adalimumab	*Humira*
Albumin	*Albutein, AlbuRx*
Alirocumab	*Praluent*
Alteplase	*Activase*
Amikacin	
Amphotericin B, conventional	
Amphotericin B, liposomal	*Ambisome*
Ampicillin/ Sulbactam	*Unasyn*
Andexanet alfa	*Andexxa*
Antithymocyte globulin (equine)	*Atgam*
Antithymocyte globulin (rabbit)	*Thymoglobulin*
Argatroban	
Aztreonam	*Azactam*
Belimumab	*Benlysta*
Bempedoic acid	
Bevacizumab	*Avastin*
Bivalirudin	*Angiomax*
Bleomycin	
Busulfan	
Cabotegravir	*Apretude*
Cabotegravir/ Rilpivirine	*Cabenuva*
Carmustine	
Caspofungin	*Cancidas*
Cefazolin	
Cefepime	
Cefotaxime	
Cefotetan	
Cefoxitin	
Ceftaroline	*Teflaro*
Ceftazidime	
Ceftriaxone	
Certolizumab pegol	*Cimzia*
Cetuximab	
Cisatracurium	*Nimbex*
Cisplatin	
Crotalidae polyvalent immune Fab	*CroFab*
Dextrose 5% in water (D5W)	
Daptomycin	*Cubicin*
Darbepoetin alfa	*Aranesp*
Denosumab	*Prolia, Xgeva*
Dexmedetomidine	*Precedex*
Digoxin immune Fab	*DigiFab*
Diphtheria and tetanus toxoids, acellular pertussis (Tdap) vaccine	*Adacel, Boostrix*
Dopamine	
Doxorubicin	
DTaP-HepB-IPV vaccine	*Pediarix*
Dulaglutide	*Trulicity*
Enalaprilat	*Vasotec IV*
Enoxaparin	*Lovenox*
Epinephrine	*Adrenalin, EpiPen*
Epoetin alfa	*Epogen, Procrit*
Epoprostenol	*Flolan*
Eptifibatide	
Ertapenem	*Invanz*
Esmolol	*Brevibloc*
Etanercept	*Enbrel*
Evolocumab	*Repatha*
Factor VIIa recombinant	*NovoSeven RT*
Ferumoxytol	*Feraheme*
Filgrastim	*Neupogen*
Flumazenil	
Fluorouracil, 5-FU	
Fosaprepitant	*Emend*
Fosphenytoin	*Cerebyx*
Four factor prothrombin complex concentrate	*Kcentra*
Fulvestrant	
Ganciclovir	
Gentamicin	
Glatiramer acetate	*Copaxone*
Golimumab	*Simponi*
Goserelin	*Zoladex*
Hepatitis A vaccine	*Havrix, Vaqta*
Hepatitis B vaccine	*Engerix-B, Heplisav-B, Recombivax HB*
Human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine (9-valent)	*Gardasil 9*
Idarucizumab	*Praxbind*

Top Prescription Drugs: Injectable Only Continued

DRUG	BRAND NAME
Ifosfamide	
Immunoglobulin	*Gammagard, Octagam, Privigen, Gamunex-C*
Inactivated influenza quadrivalent vaccine (IIV4)	*Afluria, Fluad, Fluarix, FluLaval, Flucelvax, Fluzone, Fluzone High-Dose*
Inclisiran	
Infliximab	*Remicade*
Insulin aspart	*Novolog*
Insulin detemir	*Levemir*
Insulin glargine	*Lantus, Toujeo*
Insulin lispro	*Humalog*
Insulin NPH	*Humulin N, Novolin N*
Insulin regular	*Humulin R, Novolin R*
Insulin, premixed (70% NPH/30% regular)	*Humulin 70/30, Novolin 70/30*
Irinotecan	
Iron sucrose	*Venofer*
Lactated Ringer's	
Leuprolide	*Lupron Depot*
Liraglutide	*Victoza, Saxenda*
Measles-Mumps-Rubella vaccine (MMR)	*M-M-R II*
Measles-Mumps-Rubella-Varicella vaccine (MMRV)	*ProQuad*
Meningococcal conjugate vaccine, quadrivalent (MenACWY)	*MenQuadfi, Menveo*
Meningococcal serogroup B vaccine (MenB)	*Bexsero, Trumenba*

DRUG	BRAND NAME
Meningococcal conjugate vaccine, pentavalent (MenABCWY)	*Penbraya*
Meropenem	
Micafungin	*Mycamine*
Midazolam	
Mitoxantrone	
Natalizumab	*Tysabri*
Nicardipine	*Cardene IV*
Nirsevimab	*Beyfortus*
Nitroprusside	*Nipride*
Norepinephrine	*Levophed*
Normal saline (NS), ½NS, ¼NS	
Octreotide	*Sandostatin*
Omalizumab	*Xolair*
Paclitaxel	
Palivizumab	*Synagis*
Palonosetron	
Pamidronate	
Pegfilgrastim	*Neulasta*
Penicillin G benzathine	*Bicillin L-A*
Piperacillin/ Tazobactam	*Zosyn*
Plasma-Lyte A	
Pneumococcal conjugate vaccine, 15-valent (PCV15)	*Vaxneuvance*
Pneumococcal conjugate vaccine, 20-valent (PCV20)	*Prevnar 20*
Pneumococcal conjugate vaccine, 21-valent (PCV21)	*Capvaxive*

DRUG	BRAND NAME
Pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine, 23-valent (PPSV23)	*Pneumovax 23*
Propofol	*Diprivan*
Protamine sulfate	
Rabies vaccine	*RabAvert*
Rasburicase	*Elitek*
Rituximab	*Rituxan*
Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) vaccine	*Abrysvo*
Semaglutide	*Ozempic, Wegovy*
Succinylcholine	
Tenecteplase	*TNKase*
Testosterone cypionate	
Tirzepatide	*Mounjaro, Zepbound*
Trastuzumab	*Herceptin*
Unfractionated heparin	
Varicella virus (chickenpox) vaccine	*Varivax*
Vasopressin	
Vedolizumab	*Entyvio*
Vincristine	
Zoledronic acid	*Reclast, Zometa*
Zoster virus (shingles) vaccine	*Shingrix*

TOP OTC DRUGS

For drugs that are available in both OTC and Rx (prescription) versions, the Rx doses are generally higher than the OTC doses. The brand names can be different [e.g., orlistat OTC *(Alli)* is 60 mg/dose, orlistat Rx *(Xenical)* is 120 mg/dose] and are provided as a study aid (generic may be the top-seller).

DRUG
ALLERGIC RHINITIS, COUGH AND COLD
Antihistamines, Non-Sedating
Cetirizine *(Zyrtec Allergy, Zyrtec Childrens Allergy)*
Fexofenadine *(Allegra Allergy, Allegra Allergy Childrens)*
Levocetirizine *(Xyzal Allergy 24HR, Xyzal Allergy 24HR Childrens)*
Loratadine *(Claritin, Claritin Childrens)*
Antihistamines, Sedating
Chlorpheniramine
Diphenhydramine *(Benadryl)*, OTC and Rx
Doxylamine
Cough Suppressant
Dextromethorphan *(Delsym)*
Mucolytic-Expectorant
Guaifenesin *(Mucinex, Robitussin Mucus + Chest Congestion)*
Cough Suppressant/ Mucolytic-Expectorant
Dextromethorphan/Guaifenesin *(Robafen DM, Robitussin DM)*
Decongestants
Oxymetazoline *(Afrin)* – nasal
Phenylephrine *(Sudafed PE)* – systemic
Pseudoephedrine *(Sudafed, Nexafed, Zephrex-D)* – systemic, behind the counter
Decongestants/Antihistamines, Non-Sedating
Cetirizine/Pseudoephedrine *(Zyrtec-D)*
Fexofenadine/Pseudoephedrine *(Allegra-D)*
Loratadine/Pseudoephedrine ER *(Claritin-D)*

DRUG
Nasal Steroid Inhalers
Budesonide *(Rhinocort Allergy)*
Fluticasone *(Flonase Allergy Relief, Flonase Sensimist, Children's Flonase)*
Triamcinolone *(Nasacort Allergy 24HR)*
Nasal Mast Cell Stabilizer
Cromolyn *(NasalCrom)*
COMMON SKIN CONDITIONS
Acne
Adapalene *(Differin)*, OTC and Rx
Azelaic acid
Benzoyl peroxide
Salicylic acid
Alopecia
Minoxidil *(Rogaine)* – topical
Cold Sores, for Herpes Simplex
Docosanol *(Abreva)*
Dandruff Shampoos
Coal tar *(T/Gel)*
Ketoconazole 1% *(Nizoral A-D)*
Pyrithione zinc *(Head & Shoulders)*
Selenium sulfide
Diaper Rash
Petrolatum/Zinc oxide *(Desitin)*
Topical Antifungals, for Tinea Infections
Butenafine *(Lotrimin Ultra)* – cream
Clotrimazole *(Lotrimin AF)* – cream
Miconazole *(Lotrimin AF)* – powder and spray
Terbinafine *(Lamisil AT)* – cream, gel and spray
Tolnaftate *(Tinactin)* – cream, powder and spray
Undecylenic acid – ointment, solution

DRUG
Vaginal Antifungals, for Candida Infections
Clotrimazole
Miconazole *(Monistat)*
Hemorrhoids
Phenylephrine *(Preparation H)*
Lice
Permethrin 1% *(Nix)*
Piperonyl butoxide/Pyrethrin *(RID)*
Minor Wounds
Polymyxin/Bacitracin/Neomycin *(Neosporin Original)* – topical antibiotic
Pinworm
Pyrantel pamoate
Inflammation and Rash
Hydrocortisone cream 0.5% and 1% *(Cortizone-10)* – topical, OTC and Rx
CONSTIPATION AND DIARRHEA
Antidiarrheals
Bismuth subsalicylate *(Pepto-Bismol)*
Loperamide *(Imodium A-D)*
Constipation
Bisacodyl *(Dulcolax)* – oral, enema, suppository
Calcium polycarbophil *(FiberCon)*
Docusate sodium *(Colace)* – oral, enema
Glycerin – suppository
Magnesium hydroxide *(Milk of Magnesia)*
Methylcellulose *(Citrucel)*
Polyethylene glycol 3350 *(MiraLax)*, OTC and Rx
Psyllium *(Metamucil)*
Sodium phosphates *(Fleet Enema)* – enema

Top OTC Drugs Continued

DRUG
Senna *(Ex-Lax, Senokot)*
Senna/Docusate *(Senokot S, Senna S)*
Wheat dextrin *(Benefiber)*
CONTRACEPTION
Condoms
Diaphragm
Nonoxynol-9 spermicide
Emergency Contraception
Levonorgestrel *(Plan B One-Step)*
DIABETES: INSULIN, OTC and Rx
NPH Insulin
Humulin N, Novolin N
Regular Insulin
Humulin R, Novolin R
NPH/Regular Premixed Insulins
Humulin 70/30, Novolin 70/30
DIETARY SUPPLEMENTS, NATURAL & COMPLEMENTARY MEDICINE
Calcium carbonate *(Tums)*
Calcium carbonate/Cholecalciferol *(Caltrate)*
Calcium citrate *(Cal-Citrate)*
Calcium citrate/Cholecalciferol *(Citracal)*
Coenzyme Q10
Ferrous sulfate
Omega-3 fatty acids (fish oils)
Magnesium citrate
Magnesium oxide
Probiotics
Lactobacillus (Culturelle)
Bifidobacterium longum (Align)
Saccharomyces boulardii (Florastor)
Vitamins
Niacin controlled release *(Slo-Niacin)*
Multivitamin *(One-A-Day,* others)
Prenatal multivitamin, OTC and Rx
Vitamin B complex
Vitamin B12, cyanocobalamin, OTC and Rx

DRUG
Vitamin B9, folic acid, folate, OTC and Rx
Vitamin C, ascorbic acid
Vitamin D2, ergocalciferol, OTC and Rx
Vitamin D3, cholecalciferol, OTC and Rx
GASTROESOPHAGEAL REFLUX DISEASE & PEPTIC ULCER DISEASE
Proton Pump Inhibitors, OTC and Rx
Esomeprazole 20 mg *(Nexium 24HR)*
Omeprazole 20 mg *(Prilosec OTC)*
Lansoprazole 15 mg *(Prevacid 24HR)*, Lansoprazole 15 mg ODT
H2-Receptor Antagonists, OTC and Rx
Famotidine 10-20 mg *(Pepcid AC, Zantac 360)*
Antacids & Antigas
Aluminum/Magnesium/Simethicone *(Mylanta Maximum Strength)*
Calcium carbonate *(Tums)*
Calcium carbonate/Magnesium *(Mylanta Supreme)*
Calcium carbonate/Simethicone *(Maalox Advanced Maximum Strength)*
Citric acid/Aspirin/Sodium bicarbonate *(Alka-Seltzer)*
Simethicone *(Gas-X)*
Alpha-galactosidase enzyme *(Beano)*
Lactase enzyme *(Lactaid)*
MOTION SICKNESS
Dimenhydrinate *(Dramamine)*
Meclizine *(Dramamine Less Drowsy)*
OPHTHALMICS AND OTICS
Artificial tears *(Systane, Refresh)* – dry eye
Ketotifen *(Alaway, Zaditor)* – red eyes/allergies
Naphazoline *(Clear Eyes Redness Relief)* – red eye
Naphazoline/Pheniramine *(Naphcon A, Visine A)* – red eyes/allergies
Olopatadine *(Pataday)* – red eyes/ allergies, OTC and Rx

DRUG
Tetrahydrozoline *(Visine)* – red eye
Carbamide peroxide *(Debrox)* – ear wax removal
PAIN
Acetaminophen 325/500/650 mg *(Tylenol, FeverAll* rectal suppository)
Acetaminophen/Caffeine *(Excedrin Tension Headache)*
Acetaminophen/Aspirin/Caffeine *(Excedrin Extra Strength, Excedrin Migraine)*
Acetaminophen/Caffeine/Pyrilamine *(Midol Complete)*
Aspirin *(Ecotrin, Bufferin, Ascriptin)*
Capsaicin 0.025% and 0.075% cream *(Zostrix, Zostrix HP)*
Diclofenac gel *(Voltaren)*, OTC and Rx
Ibuprofen 200 mg *(Motrin IB, Advil)*, OTC and Rx
Lidocaine patches, OTC and Rx
Magnesium salicylate *(Doan's Extra Strength)*
Methyl salicylate and menthol topical *(BenGay, Salonpas, IcyHot)*
Naproxen sodium 220 mg *(Aleve)*, OTC and Rx
Trolamine salicylate *(Aspercreme)*
Opioid Reversal
Naloxone *(Narcan, RiVive)*
SLEEP DISORDERS
Diphenhydramine *(Benadryl)*, OTC and Rx
Doxylamine *(Unisom SleepTabs)*
Melatonin
TOBACCO CESSATION
Nicotine gum *(Nicorette)*
Nicotine lozenge *(Nicorette Mini)*
Nicotine transdermal patch *(Nicoderm CQ)*
URINARY INCONTINENCE
Oxybutynin *(Oxytrol for Women)*, OTC and Rx
WEIGHT LOSS
Orlistat *(Alli)*, OTC and Rx

DIAGNOSTIC TESTS

DISORDER/CONDITION	DIAGNOSTIC TESTS (Refer to Specific Chapter for More Information)
AUTOIMMUNE CONDITIONS	
Autoimmune, Various	↑ erythrocyte sedimentation rate **(ESR),** ↑ C-reactive protein **(CRP),** positive rheumatoid factor **(RF)** antibodies, positive anti-nuclear antibody **(ANA)**
Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA)	Above autoimmune tests plus positive anti-citrullinated peptide antibody (ACPA)
Systemic Lupus Erythematosus (SLE)	Above autoimmune tests plus positive anti-dsDNA antibodies
Multiple Sclerosis (MS)	Magnetic resonance imaging **(MRI)**
ANTICOAGULATION AND BLOOD DISORDERS	
Anemia	All: ↓ **Hgb/Hct/RBCs** **Microcytic (or iron deficiency):** ↓ **MCV** (smaller cells, MCV < 80 fL) **Macrocytic (or B12 or folate deficiency):** ↑ **MCV** (larger cells, MCV > 100 fL)
Venous Thromboembolism (VTE)	**D-dimer** test (marker of fibrinolysis) Deep vein thrombosis (DVT): **ultrasound (US),** venography, MRI Pulmonary embolism (PE): pulmonary computed tomographic angiography (CTA)
Stroke Prevention	**CHA_2DS_2-VASc** scoring system (directs need for anticoagulation with atrial fibrillation)
Heparin-Induced Thrombocytopenia (HIT)	Unexplained ↓ **platelets (> 50% drop from baseline)** 5-14 days after starting heparin, positive antibodies based on a heparin-platelet factor 4 (PF4) enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA) test and/or serotonin release assay (SRA)
CARDIOVASCULAR CONDITIONS	
Acute Coronary Syndromes (ACS)	Electrocardiogram **(ECG** or **EKG),** cardiac enzymes [creatine kinase muscle/brain (CK-MB), **troponin** I and T]
Arrhythmias	**ECG** (or EKG), **Holter monitor** (a portable ECG device), heart rate (HR)
Cerebrovascular Accident (CVA, or Stroke)	Computed tomography **(CT), MRI**
Chronic Heart Failure	Echocardiogram **(echo),** ↑ B-type natriuretic peptide (BNP), ↑ N-terminal proBNP (NT-proBNP)
Stable Angina	**Cardiac stress test,** angiography
Dyslipidemia	↑ **TC, Non-HDL, LDL, TGs,** coronary artery calcium (CAC, a non-invasive CT scan of the heart that measures calcium-containing plaque)
Hypertension	↑ systolic blood pressure (SBP)/diastolic blood pressure (DBP)
Hypertensive Emergency or Urgency	Emergency: ↑ **BP (≥ 180/120 mmHg) with acute target organ damage** Urgency: ↑ **BP (≥ 180/120 mmHg) without acute target organ damage**
10-Year Atherosclerotic Cardiovascular Disease (ASCVD) Risk	10-year **ASCVD risk tool** [use if no history of ASCVD (ACS/IHD, stroke, PAD)]

Diagnostic Tests Continued

DISORDER/CONDITION	DIAGNOSTIC TESTS (Refer to Specific Chapter for More Information)
ENDOCRINE CONDITIONS	
Diabetes, Prediabetes	Fasting plasma glucose **(FPG),** oral glucose tolerance test **(OGTT),** hemoglobin A1C **(A1C),** fructosamine
Hyperthyroidism	↓ thyroid-stimulating hormone **(TSH),** ↑ free T4 **(FT4)**
Hypothyroidism	↑ **TSH,** ↓ **FT4**
FEMALE HEALTH	
Ovulation	Luteinizing hormone **(LH)** peaks 24-36 hours before ovulation
Pregnancy	Positive human chorionic gonadotropin **(hCG)** in urine or in blood
Bacterial Vaginitis	Clear, white or gray vaginal discharge, with a **fishy odor** and **pH > 4.5,** little or no pain
Candida Vaginitis	**White, thicker** vaginal discharge, **pruritus**
Trichomoniasis	**Yellow/green frothy,** foul-smelling vaginal discharge, **pH > 4.5,** soreness and pain with intercourse
PULMONARY DISORDERS	
Bronchospastic Diseases	**Spirometry,** which measures three main variables: **FEV1:** how much air can be forcefully exhaled in one second **FVC:** the maximum amount of air that can be forcefully exhaled **FEV1/FVC:** percentage of total air capacity ("vital capacity") that can be forcefully exhaled in one second
Asthma	**FVC, FEV1** and peak expiratory flow rate (PEFR) Allergic asthma: **skin test** (to detect an allergen)
Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)	**Post-bronchodilator FEV1/FVC < 0.7** Eosinophils ≥ 300 cells/μL indicates inflammation and better response to inhaled corticosteroids
ACID/BASE DISORDERS	
Metabolic Acidosis	**Arterial blood gas,** measures **pH, pCO2, HCO3** ↓ pH, ↓ HCO3; compensation: respiratory alkalosis
Respiratory Acidosis	↓ pH, ↑ pCO2; compensation: metabolic alkalosis
Metabolic Alkalosis	↑ pH, ↑ HCO3; compensation: respiratory acidosis
Respiratory Alkalosis	↑ pH, ↓ pCO2; compensation: metabolic acidosis
Anion Gap Metabolic Acidosis	Anion gap > 12 mEq/L
GASTROINTESTINAL DISORDERS	
Peptic Ulcer Disease (PUD)	Upper gastrointestinal endoscopy (mouth to small intestine) **Duodenal ulcer:** pain 2-3 hrs after eating **(without food in stomach), pain relief** with food/antacids **Gastric ulcer:** pain right after eating **(with food in stomach), little to no pain relief** with food/antacids
GERD	**Esophageal pH monitoring,** endoscopy

Diagnostic Tests Continued

DISORDER/CONDITION	DIAGNOSTIC TESTS (Refer to Specific Chapter for More Information)
H. pylori	**Urea breath test (UBT),** fecal antigen test
Inflammatory Bowel Disease (Ulcerative Colitis, Crohn's Disease)	Endoscopy (for Crohn's disease, which affects more of the GI tract) Sigmoidoscopy (for ulcerative colitis, which affects the colon and rectum) For both: colonoscopy, biopsy, CT, MRI
INFECTIONS	
General Infection	**Fever** (temperature ≥ 100.4°F or 38°C), ↑ **WBC** count, left shift (↑ bands)
C. difficile	**Positive *C. difficile* stool toxin** [enzyme immunoassay plus glutamate dehydrogenase (GDH) test] or **PCR**
HIV	**HIV antigen/antibody immunoassay, HIV-1/HIV-2 antibody** differentiation immunoassay, **HIV RNA viral load,** nucleic acid test
Infective Endocarditis	Echo (to check for vegetation), blood culture (to identify causative organism)
Lyme Disease	Round, red bullseye rash, **ELISA** test
Meningitis	**Lumbar puncture (LP),** plus symptoms of severe headache, stiff neck and altered mental status
Onychomycosis (Fungal Infection of Toenail or Fingernail)	**20% KOH** (potassium hydroxide) **smear**
Lice *(Pediculosis)*	**Pruritus,** visible lice on the scalp and **nits (eggs)** on hair shafts
Pinworm *(Vermicularis)*	**Tape test** (on skin adjacent to anus to check presence of eggs), **helminths** (worms) in blood, feces or urine
Pneumonia	**Chest X-ray** showing infiltrates, consolidations or opacities
Syphilis	Positive nontreponemal assay [rapid plasma reagin **(RPR)** or Venereal Diseases Research Laboratory **(VDRL)** blood test] and treponemal assay
***Toxoplasma gondii* Encephalitis**	Toxoplasma IgM and IgG test
Tuberculosis (TB)	Latent TB: positive tuberculin skin test **(TST)** [also known as a purified protein derivative **(PPD)**], or interferon-gamma release assay **(IGRA)** blood test Active TB: positive sputum **acid-fast bacilli (AFB) stain** and culture, chest X-ray with cavitation
Urinary Tract Infection (UTI)	**Urinalysis** (positive leukocyte esterase or WBC > 10 cells/mm^3, nitrites, bacteria), urine culture, symptoms (e.g., dysuria, urinary urgency, hematuria)
CANCER [Initial screenings; all followed by biopsy (tissue sample sent to pathology)]	
Breast	**Mammogram, ultrasound, MRI**
Cervical	**Pap smear, HPV test**
Colon	**Colonoscopy, sigmoidoscopy**, double-contrast barium enema, CT colonography, stool DNA, fecal occult blood test (FOBT), fecal immunochemical test
Lung	**CT chest**
Skin	Skin biopsy
Prostate	**Digital rectal exam (DRE), prostate-specific antigen (PSA)**
General	Carcinoembryonic antigen (CEA) test, positron emission tomography (PET)

Diagnostic Tests Continued

DISORDER/CONDITION	DIAGNOSTIC TESTS (Refer to Specific Chapter for More Information)
ADDITIONAL COMMON CONDITIONS	
Allergic Reactions	**Skin prick** (scratch) test (immediate), immunoglobulin E **(IgE) antibodies** (blood)
Bleeding	↓ Hgb/Hct, visible blood or bruising, coffee ground emesis or dark/tarry stools (upper GI bleeding), red blood in stool (lower GI bleeding or hemorrhoid)
Cholestasis (Bile Duct Blockage)	↑ alkaline phosphatase (Alk Phos), ↑ total bilirubin (Tbili), ↑ gamma-glutamyltransferase (GGT)
Cognitive Impairment (e.g., Alzheimer's)	Mini-mental state exam **(MMSE),** score < 24 indicates impairment
Cystic Fibrosis	**Sweat test**
Glaucoma	↑ intraocular pressure **(IOP),** visual field test (to identify optic nerve damage)
Gout	↑ uric acid **(UA)** level
Liver Disease	Liver function tests **(LFTs): ↑ AST/ALT, ↑ Alk Phos, ↑ Tbili,** ↑ lactate dehydrogenase (LDH) **Cirrhosis** (chronic liver disease): **↑ PT/INR, ↓ Albumin** Alcoholic liver disease: ↑ AST > ↑ ALT, ↑ GGT **Hepatic encephalopathy: ↑ ammonia** level (blood)
Movement Disorders (e.g. Parkinson Disease)	**Abnormal involuntary movement scale (AIMS),** rating scale used to measure involuntary movements, or tardive dyskinesias, as monitoring for patient improvement
Myopathy	↑ creatine kinase or **creatine phosphokinase (CPK)**
Neuropathy, Peripheral	Assess sensation with **10-g monofilament** or Ipswich touch test, pinprick, temperature and/or vibration tests
Osteoarthritis	X-ray, MRI
Osteoporosis	Bone mineral density **(BMD)** using dual energy X-ray absorptiometry **(DEXA** or DXA), **T-score ≤ -2.5** **Osteopenia: T-score -1 to -2.4**
Pain	**Pain scales,** non-verbal signs (e.g., moaning, grimacing, agitation)
Pancreatitis	**↑ amylase/lipase**
Psychiatric Disease (e.g., Depression, Schizophrenia)	**DSM-5** diagnostic criteria Depression-specific: **Ham-D or HDRS assessment scale**
Renal Disease	**↑ BUN/SCr,** creatinine clearance **(CrCl),** glomerular filtration rate **(eGFR), urine albumin** **Dehydration: BUN/SCr ratio > 20:1,** plus symptoms (e.g., ↓ urine output, dry mucus membranes, tachycardia)
Seizures/Epilepsy	Electroencephalogram **(EEG)**
Weight: Underweight, Normal Weight, Overweight, Obesity	**BMI** (plus **waist circumference** for risks associated with overweight/obesity), ideal body weight **(IBW),** total body weight **(TBW)**

PHARMACY FOUNDATIONS PART 1

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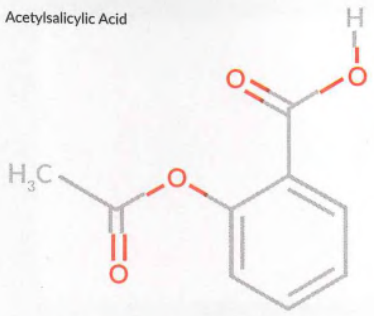

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CHAPTER 2

BASIC SCIENCE CONCEPTS

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DEFINITIONS

Substrate (or Ligand)
A substance that creates a signal or produces an effect by binding to a receptor, enzyme or transporter.

Endogenous
A substance that is produced by the body (such as a naturally-produced substrate).

Exogenous
A substance that is produced outside of the body (such as a drug or other chemical).

Agonist
A substance that combines with a receptor to initiate a reaction. Can be endogenous or exogenous (i.e., mimicking an endogenous substrate).

Antagonist
A substance that reduces or blocks a reaction. Can be endogenous or exogenous.

Induction
When a substance increases the activity of an enzyme.

Inhibition
When a substance decreases or blocks the activity of an enzyme.

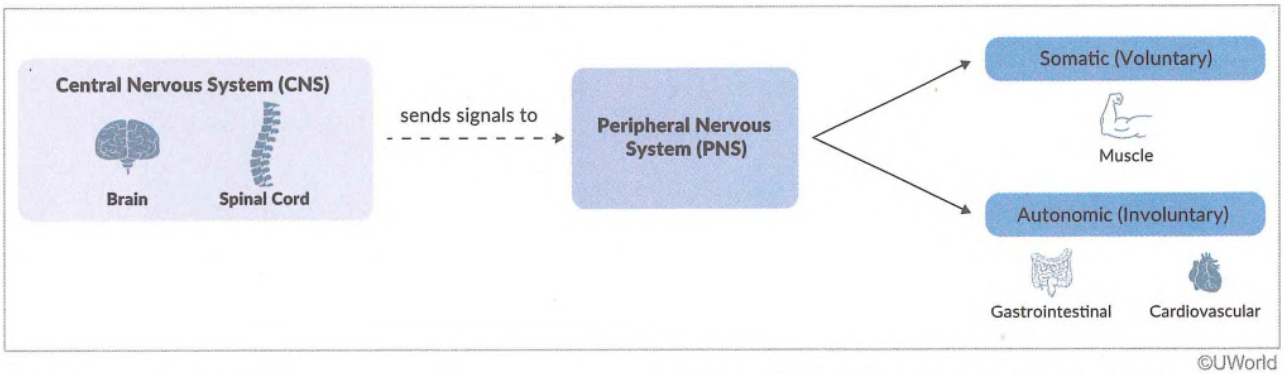
= Study Tip Gal

BACKGROUND

An understanding of basic science concepts is essential to a pharmacist's role as the drug information expert. This chapter describes common terminology and foundational concepts that should be known for the NAPLEX. These may be tested directly, or an application of this knowledge may be needed to answer case-based drug therapy questions. Important drug mechanisms are reviewed in more detail in the specific disease state chapters.

OVERVIEW OF THE NERVOUS SYSTEM

The central nervous system (CNS) includes the brain and the spinal cord. The CNS controls the functions of the rest of the body by sending signals to the peripheral nervous system (PNS). The PNS has two main systems (somatic and autonomic). The somatic nervous system (voluntary) controls muscle movement while the autonomic nervous system (involuntary) controls other bodily functions, such as digestion, cardiac output and blood pressure (BP).



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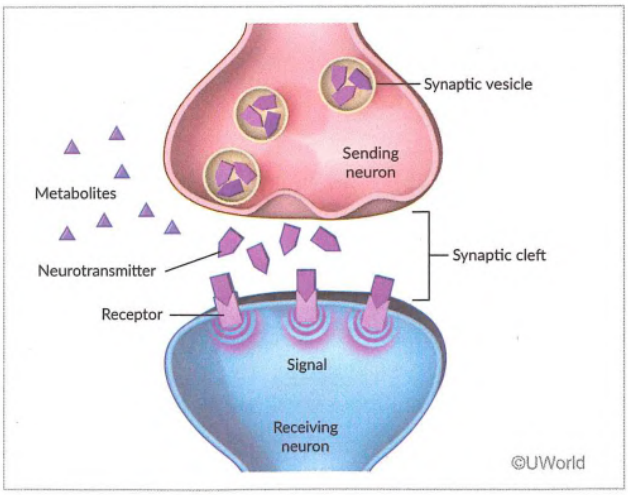
NEUROTRANSMITTERS

Signal transmission in the CNS and PNS is accomplished by neurotransmitters (NTs), which are the body's chemical messengers (i.e., substrates/ligands). NTs are released from presynaptic neurons into the synaptic cleft, then they travel to postsynaptic neurons or other parts of the body to exert their effect (see image).



Common NTs discussed in this chapter include acetylcholine (ACh), epinephrine (Epi), norepinephrine (NE), dopamine (DA) and serotonin (5-HT).

ACh is the primary NT involved in the somatic nervous system. It is released in response to neuron signals and binds to nicotinic receptors (Nn) in skeletal muscles to affect muscle movement. NTs involved in the autonomic nervous system are discussed on the following page.

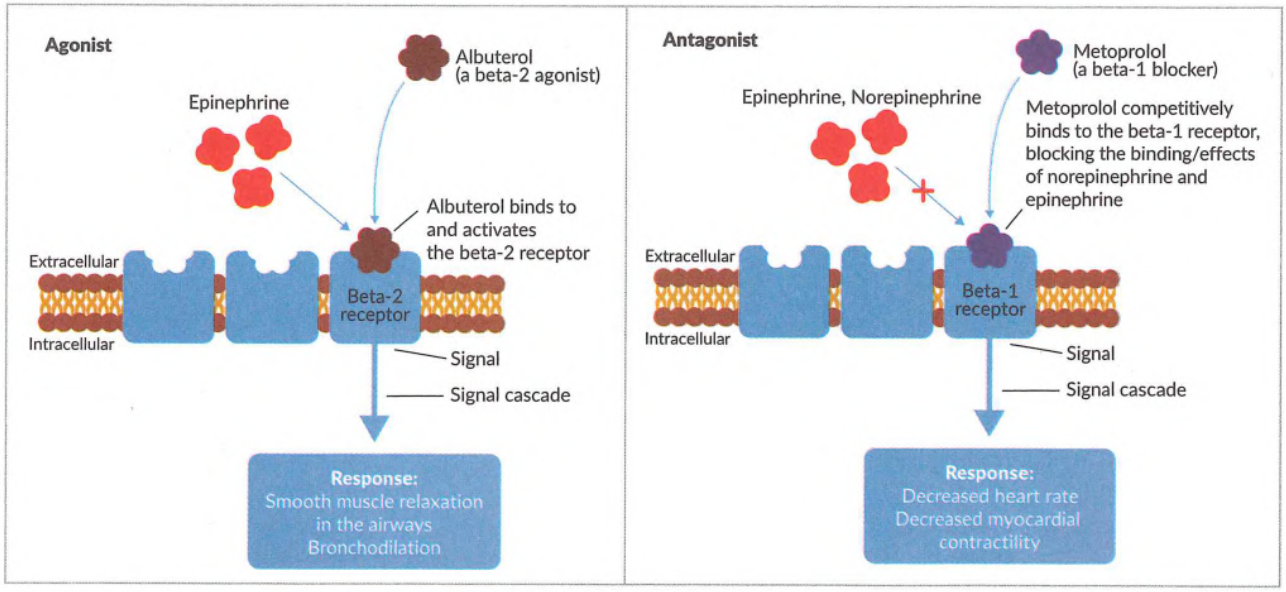
Substrates that bind to receptors can be agonists or antagonists. An agonist is a substance that binds to and activates a receptor, producing some type of response. An antagonist (sometimes called a blocker or inhibitor) binds to a receptor but does not produce a subsequent reaction; the antagonist blocks the agonist from binding and inhibits the subsequent reaction.

The interaction of an antagonist with a receptor can be competitive or non-competitive. Competitive inhibition occurs when an antagonist binds to the same active site of a receptor as the endogenous substrate, preventing it from binding and causing a reaction. With non-competitive inhibition, the antagonist binds to the receptor at a site other than the active site (called the allosteric site), which changes the shape of the active site and prevents the endogenous substrate from binding.

DRUG-RECEPTOR INTERACTIONS

Drugs are exogenous substances that can act as agonists or antagonists. Examples of each include:

- Albuterol, a beta-2 agonist that behaves similarly to epinephrine. It binds to beta-2 receptors in the lungs, which activates several steps [e.g., increased cyclic adenosine monophosphate (cAMP) production and decreased intracellular calcium] and results in bronchial smooth muscle relaxation.
- Beta-1 blockers, which prevent adrenergic neurotransmitters (e.g., epinephrine) from binding to beta-1 receptors in the heart. Epinephrine normally increases heart rate and contractility when it binds to beta-1 receptors. By blocking the receptor, beta-1 blockers decrease heart rate and contractility.



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COMMON DRUG RECEPTOR TARGETS

The Study Tip Gal on the following page lists receptors that are common drug targets along with their endogenous substrates. Example drugs that have an agonist or antagonist effect at the receptor, along with the resulting biological effect, are included. How drugs work at these receptors is closely related to the conditions they treat. For example, muscarinic and alpha-1 receptors are targets for medications used to reduce bladder contractions (e.g., oxybutynin) and to relax the bladder (e.g., doxazosin) (see the Urinary Incontinence and Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia chapters). Terbutaline is a beta-2 agonist used in acute, severe asthma exacerbations.

Some medications affect multiple receptors. Isoproterenol is a mixed beta-1 and beta-2 agonist; it is used for bradycardia and causes bronchodilation. Carvedilol inhibits alpha-1, beta-1 and beta-2 receptors. It is used to decrease BP (by causing peripheral vasodilation and a decrease in HR), but it can cause bronchoconstriction. Some vasopressors (e.g., epinephrine, norepinephrine) stimulate multiple receptors, such as alpha-1 and beta-1, leading to increased vasoconstriction, HR and BP.

Other medications work in the CNS to affect the amount of neurotransmitter released and available to act on PNS receptors. Clonidine is a centrally-acting alpha-2 adrenergic agonist. When it binds to (i.e., stimulates) presynaptic alpha-2 receptors located in the brain, there is a decrease in overall sympathetic output (i.e., neurotransmitter release). Decreased release and availability of NE and Epi to bind to adrenergic receptors results in vasodilation (decreased BP) and a decrease in HR. Refer to the Overview of the Nervous System section for more on this process.

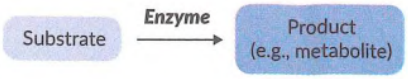
COMMON RECEPTORS, SUBSTRATES AND DRUG EXAMPLES

RECEPTOR	NATURAL SUBSTRATE	AGONIST ACTION	DRUG AGONISTS	ANTAGONIST ACTION	DRUG ANTAGONISTS
Muscarinic	Acetylcholine	↑ SLUDD*	Pilocarpine, bethanechol	↓ SLUDD*	Atropine, oxybutynin
Nicotinic	Acetylcholine	↑ HR, BP	Nicotine	Neuromuscular blockade	Neuromuscular blockers (e.g., rocuronium)
Alpha-1 (mainly peripheral)	Epinephrine, norepinephrine	Smooth muscle vasoconstriction, ↑ BP	Phenylephrine, dopamine (dose-dependent)	Smooth muscle vasodilation, ↓ BP	Alpha-1 blockers (e.g., doxazosin, carvedilol, phentolamine)
Alpha-2 (mainly brain; central)	Epinephrine, norepinephrine	↓ release of Epi and NE, ↓ BP, HR	Clonidine, brimonidine (ophthalmic, for glaucoma)	↑ BP, HR	Ergot alkaloids, yohimbine
Beta-1 (mainly heart)	Epinephrine, norepinephrine	↑ myocardial contractility, CO, HR	Dobutamine, isoproterenol, dopamine (dose-dependent)	↓ CO, HR	Beta-1 selective blockers (e.g., metoprolol) and non-selective beta-blockers (e.g., propranolol, carvedilol)
Beta-2 (mainly lungs)	Epinephrine	Bronchodilation	Albuterol, terbutaline, isoproterenol	Bronchoconstriction	Non-selective beta-blockers (e.g., propranolol, carvedilol)
Dopamine	Dopamine	Many, including renal, cardiac and CNS effects	Levodopa, pramipexole	Many, including renal, cardiac and CNS effects	First-generation antipsychotics (e.g., haloperidol), metoclopramide
Serotonin	Serotonin	Many, including platelet, GI and psychiatric effects	Triptans (e.g., sumatriptan)	Many, including platelet, GI and psychiatric effects	Ondansetron, second-generation antipsychotics (e.g., quetiapine)

**SLUDD = salivation, lacrimation, urination, diarrhea/defecation and digestion (see Autonomic Nervous System section).*

ENZYMES

Enzymes are compounds that speed up (catalyze) a reaction (e.g., creating a new compound or breaking down a compound into smaller parts). The interaction of a substrate with an enzyme can be agonistic or antagonistic, competitive or non-competitive (similar to receptors).



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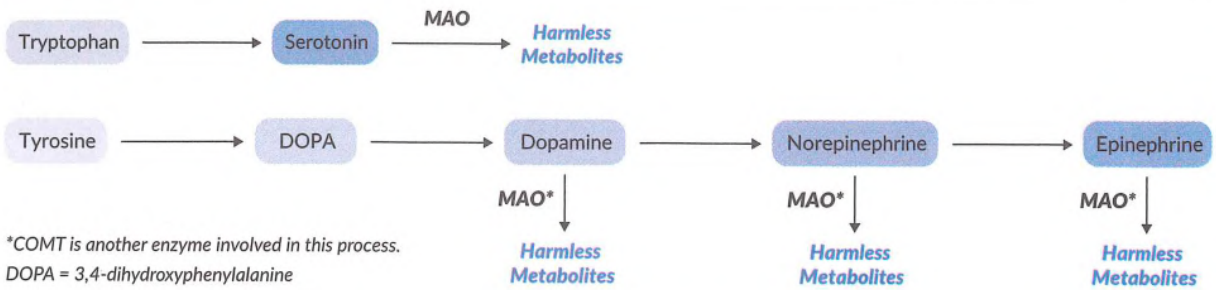
An example enzyme is monoamine oxidase (MAO), which is responsible for breaking down catecholamines (e.g., dopamine, norepinephrine, epinephrine, serotonin) as shown in the pathway below. The Study Tip Gal that follows describes common enzyme systems and drug targets that alter enzyme effects.

CATECHOLAMINE METABOLISM: ENDOGENOUS PATHWAYS



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COMMON ENZYME TARGETS FOR MEDICATIONS

ENZYME	ENDOGENOUS EFFECTS	DRUG EXAMPLES	DRUG ACTION
Acetylcholinesterase	Breaks down acetylcholine	Acetylcholinesterase inhibitors: donepezil, rivastigmine	Block acetylcholinesterase, resulting in ↑ ACh levels; used to treat Alzheimer's disease.
Angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE)	Converts angiotensin I to angiotensin II (a vasoconstrictor)	ACE inhibitors (e.g., lisinopril, ramipril)	Block angiotensin II production, resulting in ↓ vasoconstriction and ↓ aldosterone secretion; used to treat hypertension, heart failure and kidney disease.
Catechol-O-methyltransferase (COMT)	Breaks down levodopa	COMT inhibitor: entacapone	Blocks COMT enzyme to ↓ peripheral breakdown of levodopa, resulting in ↑ duration of levodopa; used to treat Parkinson disease.
Cyclooxygenase (COX)	Converts arachidonic acid to prostaglandins (↑ inflammation) and thromboxane A2 (↑ platelet aggregation)	NSAIDs (e.g., aspirin, ibuprofen)	Block COX enzymes to ↓ prostaglandins and thromboxane A2; used to treat pain/ inflammation and ↓ platelet activation/ aggregation (aspirin).
Monoamine oxidase (MAO)	Breaks down catecholamines (e.g., DA, NE, Epi, 5-HT)	MAO inhibitors: phenelzine, isocarboxazid, tranylcypromine, selegiline, rasagiline	Block MAO to ↑ catecholamine levels; used to treat depression. Excessive catecholamine ↑ (due to additive effects drugs or foods)can cause hypertensive crisis or serotonin syndrome (see next section).

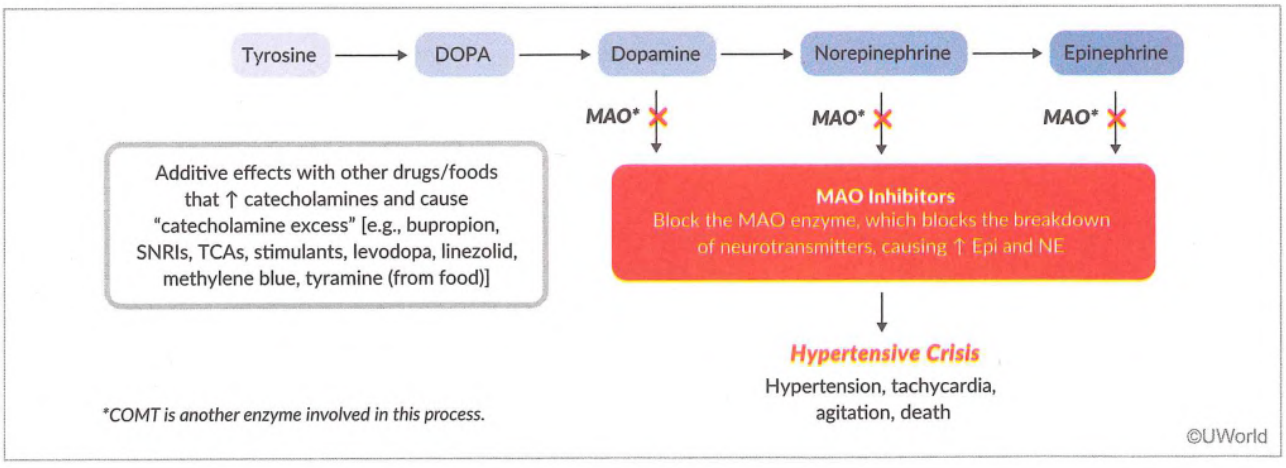
COMMON ENZYME TARGETS FOR MEDICATIONS cont.

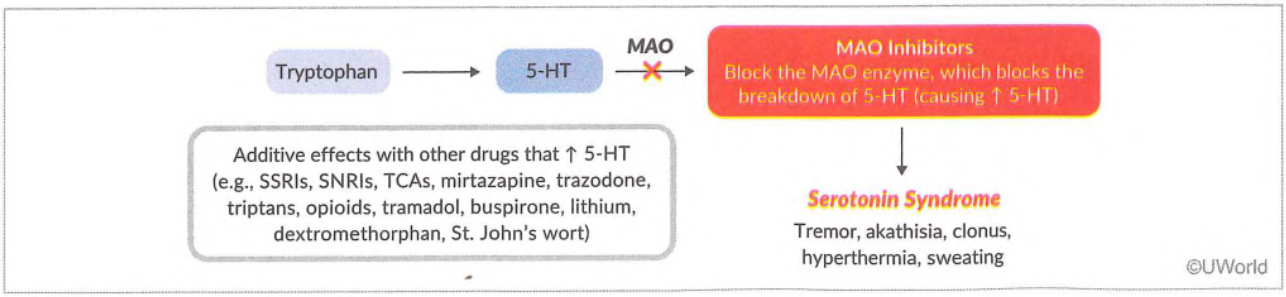
ENZYME	ENDOGENOUS EFFECTS	DRUG EXAMPLES	DRUG ACTION
Phosphodiesterase (PDE)	Breaks down cyclic guanosine monophosphate (cGMP), a smooth muscle relaxant	PDE-5 inhibitors (e.g., sildenafil, tadalafil)	Competitively bind to the same active site as cGMP on the PDE-5 enzyme, ↓ the breakdown of cGMP and prolonging smooth muscle relaxation (e.g., in the arteries of the penis); used to treat erectile dysfunction.
Vitamin K epoxide reductase	Converts vitamin K to the active form required for production of select clotting factors	Warfarin	Blocks vitamin K epoxide reductase enzyme which ↓ production of clotting factors II, VII, IX and X; used to treat or prevent blood clots.
Xanthine oxidase	Breaks down hypoxanthine into uric acid	Xanthine oxidase inhibitor: allopurinol	Blocks xanthine oxidase enzyme which decreases uric acid production; used to prevent gout attacks.

MAO INHIBITORS, HYPERTENSIVE CRISIS AND SEROTONIN SYNDROME

When multiple drugs work similarly at the same receptor or enzyme, additive effects can occur, which can be detrimental. For example, when MAO is blocked by an MAO inhibitor, there is a buildup of catecholamines. This is beneficial for treating depression, but if catecholamines accumulate (e.g., due to multiple drugs being used together that ↑ catecholamines), hypertensive crisis or serotonin syndrome can develop. The following diagrams list the key drugs and foods that contribute to these conditions. Additive drug interactions are discussed further in the Drug Interactions and Depression chapters.

CATECHOLAMINE METABOLISM: ADDITIVE EFFECTS WITH MAO INHIBITORS





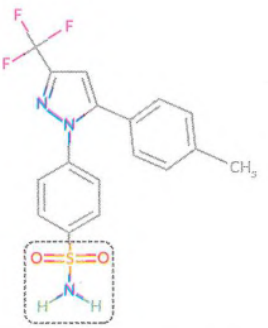
CHEMICAL STRUCTURES

The expected effect of a drug can be predicted from its mechanism of action and chemical structure. The relationship between the structure of a compound and its activity is referred to as the structure-activity relationship.

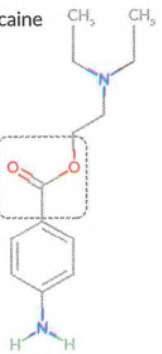
The common functional groups and drug structures that should be recognized for the exam are shown in the tables starting on the following page. Knowledge of these functional groups allows a pharmacist to predict certain effects or adverse effects of drugs. For example, identification of the sulfonamide functional group on the celecoxib compound (enclosed in the dotted lines of the structure below) explains why celecoxib is contraindicated in patients with a history of hypersensitivity (e.g., allergic reaction) to sulfonamides.

Differences in functional groups within a drug class can be important. If a patient has a hypersensitivity reaction to one type of drug in the class (e.g., an ester-type anesthetic such as procaine), other drugs in the class with the same functional group (e.g., benzocaine) should be avoided due to the potential for cross-reactivity. Selection of an anesthetic with a different functional group (e.g., an amide-type anesthetic such as lidocaine) would be reasonable. Amide-type anesthetics can be recognized by the "i" in their name (e.g., lidocaine, bupivacaine, ropivacaine).

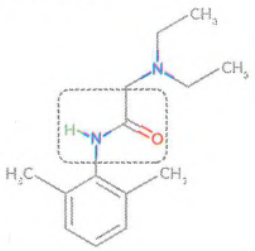
Celecoxib *(Celebrex)*



Procaine



Lidocaine



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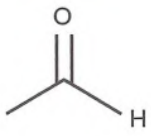
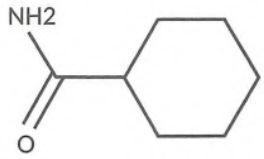
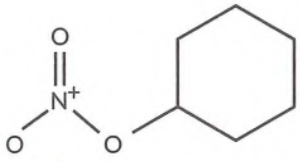
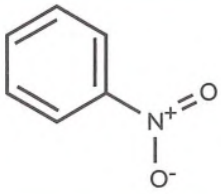
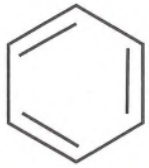
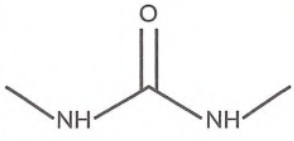
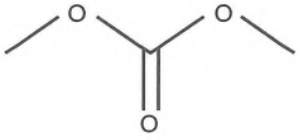
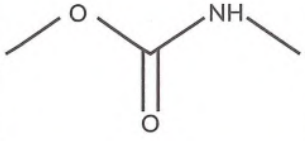
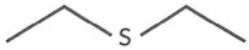
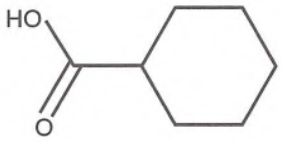
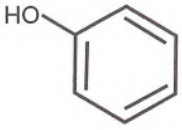
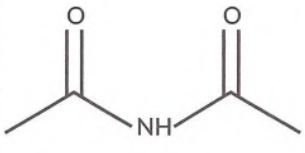
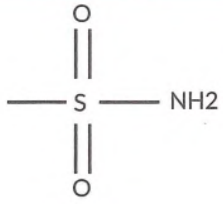
COMMON FUNCTIONAL GROUPS

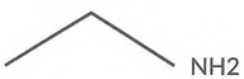
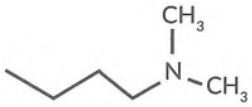
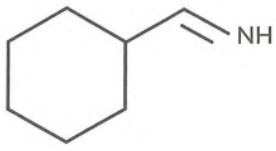
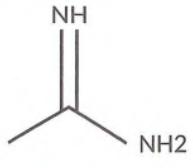
Neutral Functional Groups

HYDROXYL OR ALCOHOL (PRIMARY)	KETONE	ALDEHYDE	AMIDE
			
NITRATE	**NITRO**	**AROMATIC (BENZENE) RING**	**UREA**
			
CARBONATE	**CARBAMATE**	**ETHER**	**THIOETHER**
			

Acidic Functional Groups

CARBOXYL	PHENOL	IMIDE	SULFONAMIDE
			

Basic Functional Groups

AMINE (PRIMARY)	AMINE (TERTIARY)	IMINE	AMIDINE
			

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ESSENTIAL DRUG STRUCTURES

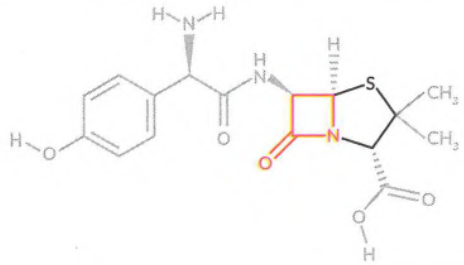
BETA-LACTAM ANTIBIOTICS

AMOXICILLIN

Beta-lactam, penicillin antibiotic

Contains a beta-lactam ring fused to a 5-sided ring

Hypersensitivity: cross-reactive to other drugs with a beta-lactam ring (see ceftriaxone and ertapenem)

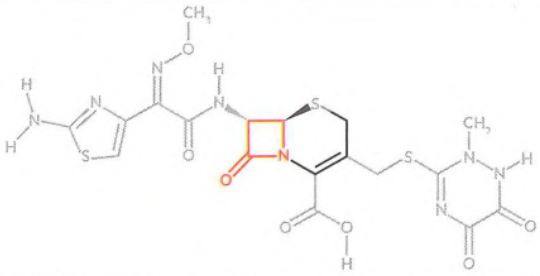


CEFTRIAXONE

Beta-lactam, cephalosporin antibiotic

Contains a beta-lactam ring fused to a 6-sided ring

Hypersensitivity: cross-reactive to other drugs with a beta-lactam ring (see amoxicillin and ertapenem)

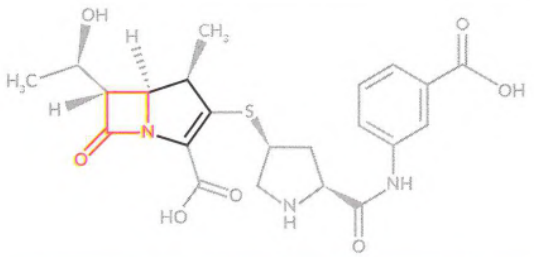


ERTAPENEM

Beta-lactam, carbapenem antibiotic

Contains a beta-lactam ring fused to a 5-sided ring

Hypersensitivity: cross-reactive to other drugs with a beta-lactam ring (see amoxicillin and ceftriaxone)



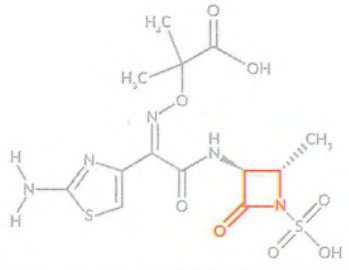
OTHER ANTIBIOTICS

AZTREONAM

Monobactam antibiotic

Contains a lactam ring not fused to another ring (note "mono" in monobactam means one)

Hypersensitivity: not cross-reactive with beta-lactam antibiotics



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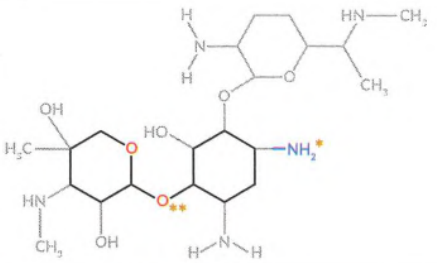
GENTAMICIN

Aminoglycoside antibiotic

Contains an amine (amino) group* and a sugar (glycoside) group**

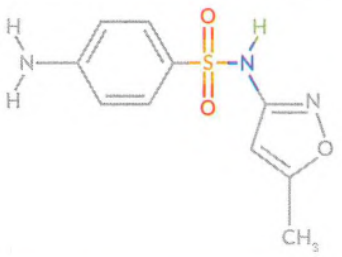


SULFAMETHOXAZOLE

Sulfonamide antibiotic

Contains a sulfonamide group

Hypersensitivity: cross-reactive to other drugs containing a sulfonamide group (e.g., celecoxib)

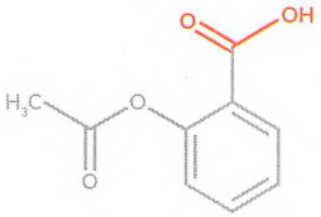


NON-STEROIDAL ANTI-INFLAMMATORY DRUGS (NSAIDS)

ASPIRIN

Salicylate non-steroidal anti-inflammatory analgesic

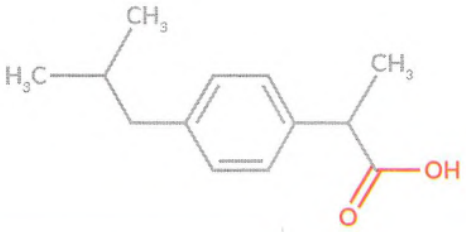
Contains an acidic, carboxyl group



IBUPROFEN

Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory analgesic

Contains a carboxyl group



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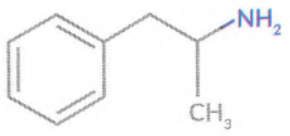
OTHER WELL-KNOWN STRUCTURES

AMPHETAMINE

Stimulant

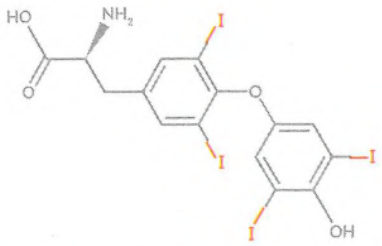
Contains a primary amine functional group (note "amine" in the name)



LEVOTHYROXINE

Thyroid hormone (T4)

Contains four iodine molecules in the structure (note the "4" in T4); converted to T3 (triiodothyronine) in the body (note "tri" meaning 3 and "iod" for iodine)

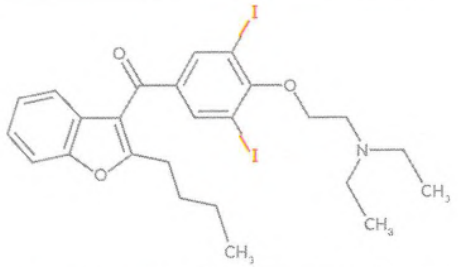


AMIODARONE

Class III antiarrhythmic

Contains two iodine molecules in the structure (note "iod" in the name)

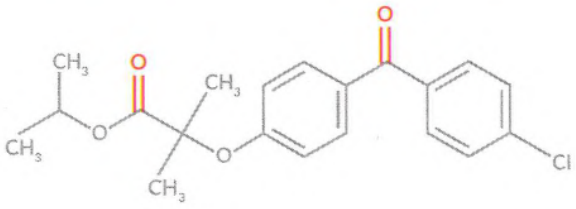
Explains the hyper- and hypothyroid effects and contraindication in patients with an iodine allergy



FENOFIBRATE

Fibrate, for high cholesterol

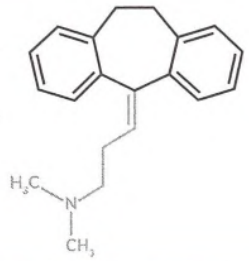
Contains ketone groups



AMITRIPTYLINE

Tricyclic antidepressant

Contains three rings in the structure (note the "tri" in the name)



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DRUG STABILITY AND DEGRADATION

STABILITY

Stability is the extent to which a product retains, within specified limits, and throughout its period of storage and use (i.e., the shelf-life), the same properties and characteristics it possessed at the time it was made. Drug stability can be compromised during manufacturing (or preparation, for compounded products) and storage, and can be recognized by changes in texture, color, smell or the development of precipitates.

DEGRADATION

The differences between drugs with similar chemical structures lies in the functional groups (see Chemical Structures section) that are attached to the compound's core structure and the bonds that hold the compound together. Reactions involving functional groups are common causes of drug degradation and can make the drug ineffective, unpalatable and/or toxic.

REACTIONS THAT CAUSE DRUG DEGRADATION

The three types of chemical reactions that cause most drug products to become unstable and degrade include:

- Oxidation-Reduction
- Hydrolysis
- Photolysis

The following sections describe each of these reactions and methods that reduce their likelihood. Drug degradation in the body (i.e., metabolism) is reviewed in the Drug Interactions and Pharmacokinetics chapters.

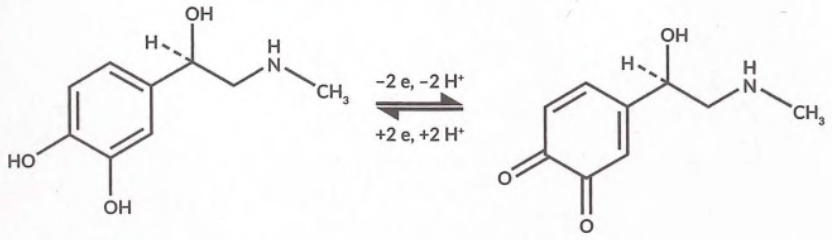
OXIDATION

A compound is oxidized when it loses electrons and is reduced when it gains electrons. Oxidation and reduction reactions occur together; when one compound is oxidized, another must be reduced at the same time. This is called the re-dox reaction. With some drugs, oxidation is visible with a color change, such as epinephrine becoming amber-colored (yellow/orangish). Other compounds turn pink/reddish when oxidized.

The molecular structures most likely to oxidize are those with a hydroxyl (–OH) group directly bonded to an aromatic ring, such as catecholamines (e.g., epinephrine), phenols (e.g., phenylephrine) and aldehydes (e.g., various structures used as flavorings).

Example: Oxidation of Epinephrine

The presence of the hydroxyl groups on the ring make oxidation more likely.



Epinephrine

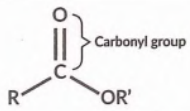
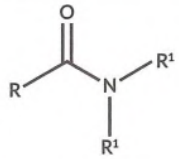
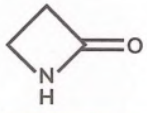
PREVENTING OXIDATION

Oxidation is catalyzed by heat, light and metal ions. Oxidation produces free radicals, which are highly reactive and can cause an oxidation chain reaction that damages the drug. Autoxidation is when oxidation reactions occur routinely during drug preparation and storage. Methods to prevent oxidation are described in the table below.

Light protection	With amber glass, UV light-blocking containers (e.g., plastic) and light-protective sleeves (bags) for IV bags, IV lines and syringes.
Temperature control	Store drugs according to their instructions (e.g., room temperature, refrigerator, freezer). Temperature ranges for each environment should comply with USP recommendations.
Antioxidants (also called free radical scavengers)	Inhibit free radicals. Common antioxidants include ascorbic acid (vitamin C), tocopherols (vitamin E), ascorbyl palmitate, Na ascorbate, Na bisulfate, Na sulfoxylate and Na thiosulfate.
Chelating agents	Chelate metal ions that have an unshared electron in the outer shell (these are free radicals). The chelating agent ties up the catalyst, preventing the reaction. Common chelators have the letters **ED**: EDetate disodium, EDetate calcium disodium and EDetic Acid (EDTA).
pH control	Maintain pH with a buffer (e.g., acetic acid/sodium acetate).

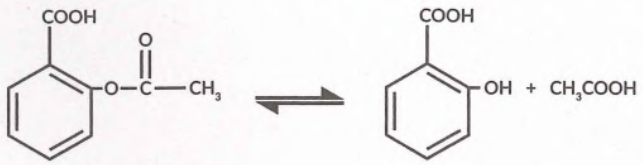
HYDROLYSIS

Hydrolysis occurs when water causes the cleavage of a bond in a molecule. The most common functional groups susceptible to hydrolysis are esters, amides and lactams; the carbonyl component of these structures is most likely to be subjected to hydrolysis.

Ester Carbonyl group bonded to an OR group	
Amide Carbonyl group bonded to a nitrogen	
Lactam, a cyclic amide This is a beta-lactam ring (present in penicillins, carbapenems, cephalosporins and monobactam)	

Example: Hydrolysis of Acetylsalicylic Acid (Aspirin)

The ester group is hydrolyzed to form acetic acid and salicylic acid. In this case, hydrolysis is beneficial. The analgesic is salicylic acid, which is formed by hydrolysis of the prodrug acetylsalicylic acid.



Aspirin - acetylsalicylic acid | Salicylic acid | Acetic acid

PREVENTING HYDROLYSIS

Methods to reduce hydrolysis are described in the table below. Some are similar to those used to reduce oxidation. An important preventative method is to protect the drug from moisture (water). For this reason, patients should be counseled to avoid storing medications in the bathroom and to close drug containers tightly.

Adsorbents (desiccants)	Adsorb any moisture that enters the container.
Lyophilized powders	Drugs stored as a lyophilized (freeze-dried) powder that are only reconstituted into a solution shortly before use have a lower risk of hydrolysis.
Hygroscopic salt	Hygroscopic means water-absorbing. In some cases, a salt form of the drug can be chosen that is less hygroscopic (i.e., will absorb less water and be less likely to degrade from hydrolysis).
Light protection, chelating agents, temperature control, pH control	See Preventing Oxidation table on prior page.

PHOTOLYSIS

Many drugs are sensitive to UV light exposure, which causes photolysis (breakage) of covalent bonds and drug degradation. Photolysis can be prevented with light protection. Compounds that are sensitive to light include ascorbic acid, folic acid, nitroprusside and phytonadione injection. Intravenous drugs that require light protection are discussed in the Intravenous Medication Principles chapter.

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PHARMACY FOUNDATIONS PART 1

CHAPTER 3

DRUG INTERACTIONS

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= Study Tip Gal

TYPES OF DRUG INTERACTIONS

PHARMACODYNAMIC DRUG INTERACTIONS

Pharmacodynamics refers to the effect or change that a drug has on the body or some other type of organism (see Study Tip Gal below). A pharmacodynamic (PD) drug interaction occurs when two or more drugs are given together, and their end effects impact each other.

PHARMACODYNAMICS: PHARMACO + DYNAMICS

"Pharmaco" refers to a drug. "Dynamic" refers to an activity, such as a type of process or change.

Pharmacodynamics = the effect that a drug has on the body. The effect can be therapeutic (e.g., morphine provides pain relief when it binds to the mu receptor) or toxic (excessive morphine can be fatal).

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PD drug interactions can occur when two or more drugs are given together. The effects can be additive (such as more sedation), antagonistic (one drug blocks the effect of another drug) or synergistic, with an amplified (more than additive) effect.

ADDITIVE EFFECTS: AGONISTS BINDING TO THE SAME RECEPTOR

Multiple drugs that are agonists at the same receptor can cause additive effects.

Example: opioids are mu-receptor agonists, that provide analgesia, but with a risk of fatal toxicity when overdosed. If two opioids (e.g., morphine and oxycodone) are taken together, the effects would be additive, with increased side effects (e.g., excessive sedation, respiratory depression, death).

ADDITIVE EFFECTS: AGONISTS BINDING TO DIFFERENT RECEPTORS

Drugs that have similar end effects through different mechanisms/receptors can cause additive effects.

Example: benzodiazepines are sedating and can suppress respiration. The effects are similar to opioids but caused by a different mechanism. Benzodiazepines bind to and enhance the effect of the endogenous inhibitory neurotransmitter gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA), causing anxiolytic, hypnotic, anticonvulsant and muscle relaxant effects (including relaxing the diaphragm, which is how respiration becomes suppressed). When taken concurrently with opioids, the additive effects increase the risk of a fatal overdose. Drugs in both classes have a boxed warning about this risk (see Study Tip Gal below).

RISK WITH CONCURRENT USE OF BENZODIAZEPINES AND OPIOIDS

Due to the heightened fatality risk when opioids and benzodiazepines are taken together, the FDA added a boxed warning to all drugs in both classes.

WARNING: RISKS FROM CONCOMITANT USE WITH OPIOIDS

Concomitant use of benzodiazepines and opioids may result in profound sedation, respiratory depression, coma and death.

- Limit concomitant prescribing of these drugs to patients for whom alternative treatment options are inadequate.
- Restrict dosages and durations to the minimum required.
- Monitor patients for signs and symptoms of respiratory depression and sedation.

Another example: warfarin causes anticoagulation through inhibition of vitamin K-dependent clotting factors. Aspirin blocks the effects of platelets. Although they work through different mechanisms, both can cause increased bleeding; when used together, the risk is greater.

ANTAGONISTS BLOCK THE ACTION OF AGONISTS

An antagonist blocks an agonist from binding to its receptor. The agonist is unable to initiate a change that would have resulted in some effect (e.g., analgesia from an opioid, or respiratory depression when the opioid dose is excessive).

Example: naloxone is a mu-receptor antagonist; it saturates mu-receptors and blocks an opioid from binding. Naloxone is used to reverse respiratory depression, but also reverses the analgesic effect.

SYNERGISTIC EFFECTS

Synergy occurs when two drugs taken in combination have a greater effect than that obtained by simply adding the two individual effects together.

Example: oxycodone provides analgesia as a mu-receptor agonist. Acetaminophen provides analgesia by a different mechanism, which is not fully understood (some of the analgesic effect is thought to occur via inhibition of prostaglandin synthesis). The mechanisms that produce analgesia with opioids and acetaminophen do not overlap. Acetaminophen taken with oxycodone produces more analgesia than the effect that would be expected from adding together the analgesic effect provided by each drug.

PHARMACOKINETIC DRUG INTERACTIONS

Pharmacokinetics (PK) refers to the effect or change that the body has on a drug (see Study Tip Gal below).

PHARMACOKINETICS: PHARMACO + KINETICS

"Pharmaco" refers to a drug. "Kinetics" refers to motion.

Pharmacokinetics = the effect the body has on the drug as it goes through the absorption, distribution, metabolism and excretion (ADME) processes.

- **A**bsorption (typically occurs in the small intestine with oral drugs)
- **D**istribution (through the blood and dispersed throughout the tissues)
- **M**etabolism (including enzymatic reactions)
- **E**xcretion [removal of the drug or end products (metabolites) from the body]

PK drug interactions occur when one drug alters the absorption, distribution, metabolism or excretion of another drug. PK drug interactions can be beneficial or harmful.

REDUCED ABSORPTION

Chelation occurs when a drug binds to polyvalent cations (e.g., Mg^{2+}, Ca^{2+}, Fe^{2+}) in another compound (e.g., antacids, iron supplements). The chelated complex cannot dissolve in the gut fluid and will pass out in the stool.

Example: quinolone antibiotics can bind to calcium-containing drugs, dairy products or calcium-fortified foods. When taken together, the antibiotic will not dissolve, will not be absorbed, and the infection may not be adequately treated.

Drugs with polyvalent cations or other binding properties (e.g., antacids, multivitamins, sucralfate, bile acid resins, aluminum, calcium, iron, magnesium, zinc, phosphate binders) should be separated from quinolones, tetracyclines, levothyroxine and oral bisphosphonates.

Some drugs require an acidic gut for adequate absorption. If gastrointestinal pH is increased, absorption will be decreased.

Example: acid-suppressing drugs (e.g., proton pump inhibitors, H2RAs) decrease the absorption of some antifungals (e.g., itraconazole) if taken together. This can result in untreated or resistant infections.

The Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD) & Peptic Ulcer Disease (PUD) chapter contains a more comprehensive list of common drugs that have binding interactions or require an acidic gut for absorption.

INDUCTION OR INHIBITION OF METABOLISM

The majority of PK drug interactions occur during metabolism (e.g., Phase I or Phase II reactions) in the liver. Drug-drug interactions can be harmful or beneficial.

Example of a beneficial interaction: ritonavir and darunavir are used together. Ritonavir inhibits the metabolism of darunavir, which "boosts" darunavir levels and increases its efficacy in treating HIV.

Examples of harmful interactions: clarithromycin inhibits warfarin metabolism (which increases the INR and risk of bleeding), and rifampin induces warfarin metabolism (which decreases the INR and increases the risk for blood clots). Both reactions are potentially harmful, but treatment with these drug combinations may be necessary. The dose of warfarin can be decreased (with clarithromycin) or increased (with rifampin) to keep the INR in the desired range.

DECREASED OR INCREASED EXCRETION

Renal excretion is the primary route of drug excretion. Drug interactions can block or enhance renal excretion.

Example of decreased renal excretion: probenecid blocks the renal excretion of penicillin. Giving probenecid with penicillin can be beneficial when high penicillin levels are needed to cross the blood-brain barrier and provide effective treatment of neurosyphilis.

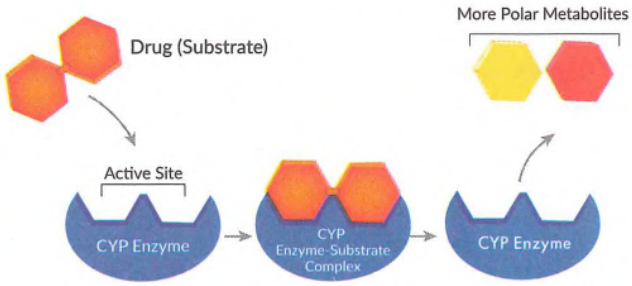
Example of increased renal excretion: salicylate (e.g., aspirin) overdose results in toxicity (tinnitus, metabolic acidosis). Intravenous sodium bicarbonate alkalinizes the urine, which causes the salicylate to become ionized. Ionized compounds are more hydrophilic (water-loving) and will stay in the urine. Less will be reabsorbed through the renal tubules (i.e., across a lipid membrane) back into the blood. Compounds that stay in the urine are renally excreted.

ENZYME SYSTEMS, DRUG METABOLISM AND DRUG INTERACTIONS

CYTOCHROME P450 ENZYMES

The purpose of cytochrome P450 (CYP450) enzymes is to catalyze Phase I reactions that either produce essential compounds (e.g., cholesterol, cortisol) or uncover or insert a polar (i.e., water-loving) group on a compound to facilitate renal excretion. CYP450 enzymes are primarily expressed in the liver.

How CYP450 Enzymes Metabolize Drugs



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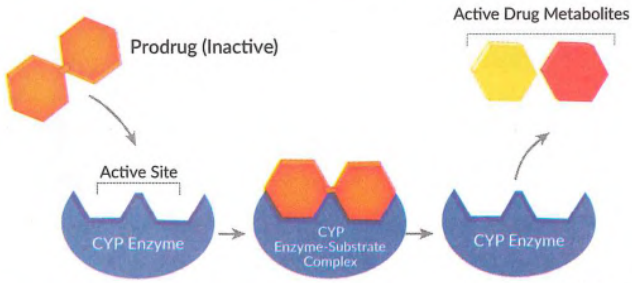
More than 50 CYP enzymes have been identified, with six of them metabolizing most drugs. CYP3A4 metabolizes ~34% of all CYP450 drug substrates. The function of CYP450 enzymes can be affected by genetics (see Pharmacogenomics chapter) and other drugs that act as enzyme inhibitors or inducers.

A table of common CYP450 enzyme substrates, inducers and inhibitors is at the end of the chapter.

PRODRUGS: INACTIVE DRUGS CONVERTED BY CYP ENZYMES TO ACTIVE DRUGS

Prodrugs are taken by the patient in an inactive form and are converted by CYP450 enzymes into the active form.

How CYP450 Enzymes Metabolize Prodrugs



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Prodrugs are used by drug manufacturers to:

- Increase bioavailability. An example of this is valacyclovir, which is metabolized to the active drug acyclovir. Valacyclovir has higher bioavailability than acyclovir and is dosed less frequently.
- Prevent drug abuse. An example of this is lisdexamfetamine, which is formulated with an amino acid (lysine) attached to the amphetamine. This renders the amphetamine inactive, until the lysine is detached by enzymatic cleavage, which prevents the crushing and snorting of the drug.

The Study Tip Gal below lists some common prodrugs and their active metabolites along with some example safety concerns that can arise when a prodrug is used in patients with altered drug metabolism (e.g., due to genetics or a drug interaction).

COMMON PRODRUGS AND EXAMPLE SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

PRODRUG AND ACTIVE METABOLITE	EXAMPLE SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS
Capecitabine → Fluorouracil	Codeine, by itself, and in combination products. ■ Risk of toxicity with ultra-rapid metabolizers (UMs)* of CYP2D6 due to a more rapid conversion to morphine. □ Do not use codeine in UMs of 2D6. ■ Risk of poor analgesia with poor metabolizers (PMs)* of CYP2D6. □ Use an alternative analgesic in PMs of 2D6.
Clopidogrel → Active metabolite	Clopidogrel: ■ Risk with CYP2C19 inhibitors, which can block conversion to the active form. □ Do not use with CYP2C19 inhibitors, including omeprazole and esomeprazole (can ↓ antiplatelet effect). ■ Risk with PMs of CYP2C19 (low conversion to the active form, with reduced antiplatelet activity). □ Use an alternative P2Y12 inhibitor in PMs of 2C19.
Codeine → Morphine	
Colistimethate → Colistin	
Cortisone → Cortisol	
Famciclovir → Penciclovir	
Fosphenytoin → Phenytoin	
Isavuconazonium sulfate → Isavuconazole	
Levodopa → Dopamine	
Lisdexamfetamine → Dextroamphetamine	
Prednisone → Prednisolone	
Primidone → Phenobarbital	
Tramadol → Active metabolite	
Valacyclovir → Acyclovir	
Valganciclovir → Ganciclovir	

**See Pharmacogenomics chapter.*

NON-CYP450 ENZYMES

CYP450 enzymes are involved in Phase I reactions. Other enzymes, including those active in Phase II reactions, can also alter drug levels. For example, bictegravir, an antiretroviral drug for HIV, is a substrate of CYP3A4 and the Phase II enzyme uridine diphosphate glucuronosyltransferase (UGT) 1A1. Inducers or inhibitors of CYP3A4 or UGT1A1 will change the metabolism of bictegravir.

Another type of Phase II enzyme, N-acetyltransferase (NAT), is well known due to its identification early in the history of pharmacogenomic studies. NATs are highly polymorphic; differences in the degree of isoniazid toxicity were found to be due to differences in the rate of acetylation by NAT.

CYP ENZYME INHIBITORS INCREASE THE CONCENTRATION OF SUBSTRATE DRUGS

Drugs that are CYP enzyme inhibitors decrease enzyme function and the ability to metabolize compounds. Drugs that are substrates for the same enzyme as a CYP inhibitor will have a decreased rate of drug metabolism and an increased serum drug level. In some cases, less drug will be lost to first-pass metabolism. Enzyme inhibition is fast; effects are seen within a few days and will end quickly when the inhibitor is discontinued.

With prodrugs, inhibitors and inducers have an opposite effect on drug levels. With an inhibitor, there are less functional enzymes to convert the prodrug and the concentration of the active drug decreases (see clopidogrel example in the Common Prodrugs Study Tip Gal on the previous page).

The FDA labels enzyme inhibitors as strong, moderate or weak, based on the effect on metabolism of substrate drugs. The Study Tip Gal below describes CYP inhibitors that are commonly involved in drug interactions. For most, the interaction occurs because the drug listed is a moderate or strong CYP3A4 inhibitor. For others (e.g., amiodarone), interactions occur because the drug inhibits multiple CYP enzymes (e.g., 3A4, 2C9, 2D6).

COMMON CYP INHIBITORS INVOLVED IN DRUG INTERACTIONS

G ♥ PACMAN

Grapefruit

♥

Protease inhibitors (PIs), especially ritonavir, but many PIs are potent inhibitors

Azole antifungals (fluconazole, itraconazole, ketoconazole, posaconazole, voriconazole and isavuconazonium)

Cyclosporine, cobicistat

Macrolides (clarithromycin and erythromycin, **not** azithromycin)

Amiodarone (and dronedarone)

Non-DHP CCBs (diltiazem and verapamil)

Effect on Substrates

- Decreased metabolism
- Increased serum levels and clinical effects
- **IN**hibitors = **IN**creased effects/levels/ADRs/ toxicities

Effect on Prodrugs

- Decreased conversion to the active drug (↓ serum levels and clinical effects)

Recognizing the Problem

- Perform therapeutic drug monitoring
- Monitor for therapeutic effect, ADRs, toxicity

Possible Actions: decrease dose of substrate (unless a prodrug), use alternate drug to avoid combination

CASE SCENARIO: TOXICITY WITH AN INHIBITOR

A 76-year-old male presents to the pharmacy with a voriconazole prescription to treat aspergillosis.

His drug profile includes betaxolol 1 drop OU BID, simvastatin 40 mg PO QHS and hydrochlorothiazide 25 mg PO QAM.

Recognizing the Problem
Voriconazole is a strong CYP3A4 inhibitor and simvastatin is a major CYP3A4 substrate. Voriconazole will increase the simvastatin level, increasing the risk of muscle toxicity and rhabdomyolysis.

Pharmacist Actions
The combination of voriconazole and simvastatin is contraindicated.

Ensure that the drugs are not used concurrently. Recommend an alternative statin, such as rosuvastatin.

CYP ENZYME INDUCERS DECREASE THE CONCENTRATION OF SUBSTRATE DRUGS

Drugs that are CYP enzyme inducers increase enzyme production or activity. Drugs that are substrates for the same enzyme as a CYP inducer will have an increased rate of drug metabolism and a decreased serum drug level. In some cases, more drug will be lost to first-pass metabolism. Inducers can cause therapeutic failure.

With an inducer, there are more enzymes to catalyze the conversion of a prodrug and the concentration of the active drug increases.

Similar to inhibitors, the FDA labels enzyme inducers as strong, moderate or weak, based on the effect on metabolism of substrate drugs. The Study Tip Gal below describes CYP inducers that are commonly involved in drug interactions. For most, the interaction occurs because the drug listed is a moderate or strong CYP3A4 inducer and/or it induces multiple CYP enzymes (e.g., rifampin).

COMMON CYP INDUCERS INVOLVED IN DRUG INTERACTIONS

PS PORCS

Phenytoin

Smoking

Phenobarbital

Oxcarbazepine

Rifampin
(and rifabutin, rifapentine)

Carbamazepine
(also an auto-inducer)

St. John's wort

Effect on Substrates

- Increased metabolism
- Decreased serum levels and clinical effects
- In**D**ucers = **D**ecreased effects/levels

Effect on Prodrugs

- Increased conversion to the active drug (↑ serum levels and clinical effects)

Recognizing the Problem

- Perform therapeutic drug monitoring
- Monitor for therapeutic effect

Possible Actions: increase dose of substrate (unless a prodrug), use alternate drug to avoid combination

CASE SCENARIO: SUBTHERAPEUTIC LEVEL WITH AN INDUCER

A 34-year-old female with a mechanical mitral valve has been taking warfarin chronically to prevent thrombosis.

Warfarin dose: 5 mg PO daily

INR range for the past 6 months: 2.6-3.1 (INR goal 2.5-3.5)

She was admitted for infective endocarditis and started on gentamicin, ceftriaxone, rifampin and vancomycin.

Recognizing the Problem
Rifampin is an inducer of P-gp, CYP2C9, 3A4, 1A2 and 2C19.

Warfarin is metabolized by CYP2C9 (major), 1A2, 2C19 and 3A4.

Pharmacist Actions
Monitor INR more frequently; increase warfarin dose as needed.

"LAG" TIME FOR ENZYME INDUCTION

Induction most often requires additional enzyme production, which takes time. The full effect on drug levels may not be seen for up to four weeks. When the inducer is stopped, it could take 2 – 4 weeks for the induction effects to disappear completely; the excess enzymes will degrade based on their half-lives.

GUT EXCRETION BY DRUG TRANSPORTERS

P-GLYCOPROTEIN EFFLUX PUMPS

Permeability glycoprotein (P-gp) efflux pumps (or transporters) are located in many tissue membranes where they protect against foreign substances by moving them out of critical areas. The term efflux means to flow out, and P-gp pumps in the cell membranes of the GI tract transport drugs and their metabolites out of the body by pumping them into the gut, where they can be excreted in the stool.

When a drug blocks (or inhibits) P-gp, a drug that is a P-gp substrate will have increased absorption (less drug is pumped into the gut) and the substrate drug level will increase. There are other transporters in other parts of the body that are not described here, including efflux pumps that cause resistance by pumping chemotherapeutics out of cancer cells, and the organic ion transporter OATP1B1/3, which pumps drugs and other compounds from the blood into the liver.

There is overlap among the enzymes and transporters that protect the body from perceived toxins, including drugs. Many drugs which are substrates, inhibitors or inducers of P-gp have the same effect on CYP450 enzymes. The table below lists common P-gp substrates, inducers and inhibitors. A chart of common CYP450 substrates, inducers and inhibitors can be found at the end of the chapter.

P-GP COMMON SUBSTRATES, INDUCERS AND INHIBITORS

SUBSTRATES	INDUCERS	INHIBITORS
Anticoagulants (apixaban, edoxaban, dabigatran, rivaroxaban) **Cardiovascular drugs** (digoxin, diltiazem, carvedilol, ranolazine, verapamil) **HCV drugs** (sofosbuvir) **Immunosuppressants** (cyclosporine, sirolimus, tacrolimus) **Others** (atazanavir, colchicine, dolutegravir, posaconazole, raltegravir, saxagliptin)	Carbamazepine, dexamethasone, phenobarbital, phenytoin, rifampin, St. John's wort, tipranavir	**Anti-infectives** (clarithromycin, itraconazole, posaconazole) **Cardiovascular drugs** (amiodarone, carvedilol, conivaptan, diltiazem, dronedarone, quinidine, verapamil) **HCV drugs** (ledipasvir) **HIV drugs** (cobicistat, ritonavir) **Others** (cyclosporine, flibanserin, ticagrelor)

ENTEROHEPATIC RECYCLING

After a drug has been metabolized in the liver, it can be transported through the bile back to the gut. From the gut, the drug can be reabsorbed (primarily in the small intestine, where most drugs are absorbed), enter into the portal vein and travel back to the liver. The recycling of an already-metabolized drug is called enterohepatic recycling, which increases the duration of action of many drugs, including some antibiotics, some NSAIDs, mycophenolate and the cholesterol-lowering drug ezetimibe.

COMMON DRUG INTERACTIONS

Drug interactions are an important part of pharmacy practice. This chapter covers common drug interactions that involve major drug classes (e.g., CNS depressants) or drugs with specific properties (e.g., QT-prolonging drugs). Other important drug interactions involving specific drugs (e.g., warfarin, lithium, theophylline and more) are discussed in depth in their respective chapters (e.g., Anticoagulation, Bipolar Disorder, Asthma).

The major categories of drug interactions discussed in the tables that follow include:

- Common Cardiovascular Drug Interactions
- Inhibitors Increase Substrate Drugs
- Inducers Decrease Substrate Drugs
- Drugs with Additive Risks

COMMON CARDIOVASCULAR DRUG INTERACTIONS

INTERACTION	RISK	ACTIONS BY PHARMACIST/NOTES
AMIODARONE **+ Warfarin** Can be used together for atrial fibrillation treatment: amiodarone (for rhythm control), warfarin (to reduce clot risk). Dronedarone has similar drug interaction issues.	Amiodarone inhibits multiple enzymes, including CYP2C9, which metabolizes the more potent warfarin isomer. ↓ warfarin metabolism causes ↑ INR and bleeding risk.	**If using amiodarone 1st and adding warfarin** ■ Start warfarin at a lower dose of ≤ 5 mg. **If using warfarin 1st and adding amiodarone** ■ ↓ warfarin dose 30-50%, depending on the INR. **Taking both** ■ Monitor INR; adjust as needed.
AMIODARONE **+ Digoxin** Can be given together for atrial fibrillation treatment: amiodarone (for rhythm control), digoxin (for rate control, or for heart failure symptom improvement).	Amiodarone inhibits P-gp; digoxin is a P-gp substrate. ↓ digoxin excretion, ↑ ADRs/toxicity. Amiodarone and digoxin both ↓ HR, ↑ risk of bradycardia, arrhythmia, fatality.	**If using amiodarone 1st and adding digoxin** ■ Start oral digoxin at a low dose, such as 0.125 mg daily. **If using digoxin 1st and adding amiodarone** ■ ↓ oral digoxin dose 50% (e.g., change 0.25 mg daily to 0.125 mg daily, or change 0.125 mg daily to 0.125 mg every other day). **Taking both amiodarone and digoxin** ■ Instruct patient to monitor for symptoms of digoxin toxicity: nausea, vomiting, vision changes; if present, contact prescriber. ■ Monitor HR; normal is 60-100 BPM (can be lower, based on patient's history and physical state). Check for other drugs that ↓ HR: beta-blockers, clonidine, diltiazem, verapamil, dexmedetomidine. ■ If digoxin is being used for rate control, consider beta-blockers or non-DHP CCBs instead.
DIGOXIN **+ Loop diuretic** Can be given together for heart failure treatment: digoxin (for symptom improvement), loop diuretics (to alleviate symptoms due to fluid overload).	Loop diuretics ↓ K, Mg, Ca and Na. Low K, Mg or Ca will worsen arrhythmias. Digoxin toxicity risk is increased with ↓ K and Mg levels and ↑ Ca levels. Caution: HF and renal impairment often occur together. Digoxin is cleared by P-gp and excreted by the kidneys; renal impairment (which can be exacerbated by loop diuretics) ↑ digoxin levels and toxicity risk.	**Taking digoxin and a loop diuretic** ■ Monitor electrolytes and correct if abnormal. ■ Renal impairment: ↓ digoxin dose or frequency, or discontinue.

INTERACTION	RISK	ACTIONS BY PHARMACIST/NOTES
DRUGS THAT DECREASE HEART RATE Diltiazem, verapamil or beta-blockers for rate control; clonidine and beta-blockers to lower blood pressure.	Additive effects when drugs that ↓ HR are used together, including amiodarone, digoxin, beta-blockers, clonidine, diltiazem, verapamil and dexmedetomidine.	Monitor HR; normal is 60-100 BPM (can be lower, based on patient's history and physical state).
STATINS **+ Strong CYP3A4 inhibitors** Inhibitors: protease inhibitors (including ritonavir), cobicistat, clarithromycin, azole antifungals, erythromycin, cyclosporine, grapefruit/grapefruit juice	↑ levels of CYP3A4 substrates: lovastatin, simvastatin, atorvastatin. ↑ myopathy risk; if severe (with high CPK), can cause rhabdomyolysis with acute renal failure.	Simvastatin and lovastatin are contraindicated with strong CYP3A4 inhibitors. Recommend a statin not metabolized by CYP450 enzymes (e.g., pitavastatin, pravastatin, rosuvastatin).
WARFARIN **+ CYP2C9 inhibitors and inducers** Inhibitors: azole antifungals, sulfamethoxazole/ trimethoprim, amiodarone, metronidazole Inducers: rifampin, St. John's wort	CYP2C9 inhibitors: ↑ levels of warfarin (↑ INR and bleeding risk). CYP2C9 inducers: ↓ levels of warfarin (↓ INR and ↑ clotting risk).	Monitor INR; therapeutic range is 2-3 for most conditions (2.5-3.5 for some high-risk indications, such as mechanical mitral valve). Some drugs (e.g., amiodarone) require prophylactic warfarin dose adjustment when started (see beginning of table).

INHIBITORS INCREASE SUBSTRATE DRUGS

INTERACTION	RISK	ACTIONS BY PHARMACIST/NOTES
CYP3A4 INHIBITORS **+ CYP3A4 substrates (many)** Includes the opioids fentanyl, hydrocodone, oxycodone, methadone.	↓ CYP3A4 substrate (i.e., drug) metabolism will cause ↑ drug levels and ↑ ADRs/toxicity.	Do not use a CYP3A4 inhibitor with an opioid metabolized by CYP3A4; the combination will cause increased ADRs, including sedation, and can be fatal. Grapefruit/grapefruit juice: do not take with CYP3A4 substrates. Drugs that specifically include instructions not to take with grapefruit include amiodarone, simvastatin, lovastatin, nifedipine and tacrolimus; many other drugs have similar risk.
VALPROATE **+ Lamotrigine** Valproate is an inhibitor of lamotrigine metabolism.	Valproate ↓ lamotrigine metabolism and ↑ lamotrigine levels causing ↑ risk of serious skin reactions, including SJS/ TEN (can be fatal).	Initiate lamotrigine using the starter kit that begins with lower lamotrigine doses. Titrate carefully every 2 weeks. Counsel patients to get emergency help if rash develops.

INTERACTION	RISK	ACTIONS BY PHARMACIST/NOTES
MONOAMINE OXIDASE (MAO) INHIBITORS Isocarboxazid, phenelzine, tranylcypromine, rasagiline, selegiline, linezolid, methylene blue + **Drugs/foods that ↑ epinephrine (Epi), norepinephrine (NE), dopamine (DA)** SNRIs, TCAs, bupropion, levodopa, stimulants, including amphetamines used for ADHD (e.g., methylphenidate, lisdexamfetamine, dextroamphetamine), tyramine (from foods) + **Drugs that ↑ serotonin (5-HT)** Antidepressants: SSRIs, SNRIs, TCAs, mirtazapine, trazodone Opioids and analgesics: fentanyl, methadone, tramadol Others: buspirone, dextromethorphan (when high doses taken as drug of abuse), lithium, St. John's wort	The MAO enzyme metabolizes Epi, NE, DA, tyramine and 5-HT. Blocking MAO with an MAO-inhibitor will ↑ Epi, NE, DA and 5-HT. High Epi, NE and DA can cause hypertensive crisis. High 5-HT can cause serotonin syndrome; see Serotonergic Toxicity in the Drugs with Additive Risks section.	Do not use together. Use a 2-week washout period when switching between drugs with MAO inhibition or serotonergic properties (except with fluoxetine, wait 5 weeks). Tyramine-rich foods have been aged, pickled, fermented or smoked, including aged cheeses, air-dried meats, sauerkraut, some wines and beers.
CYP2D6 INHIBITORS Amiodarone, fluoxetine, paroxetine, fluvoxamine **+ CYP2D6 substrates** Many, including codeine, meperidine, tramadol, tamoxifen	↓ drug substrate metabolism, ↑ ADRs/toxicity (or decreased clinical efficacy if a prodrug).	Avoid using together if possible.
CYP3A4, P-GP INHIBITORS + **Calcineurin inhibitors (CNIs)** Tacrolimus, cyclosporine **or** **mTOR kinase inhibitors** Sirolimus, everolimus	↓ drug substrate metabolism, ↑ ADRs/toxicity, including nephrotoxicity, ↑ BP, metabolic syndrome and other adverse effects (see Transplant chapter).	Avoid using together or ↓ dose of CNI or mTOR kinase inhibitor cautiously and based on drug levels. Monitor transplant drug levels.

INDUCERS DECREASE SUBSTRATE DRUGS

INTERACTION	RISK	ACTIONS BY PHARMACIST/NOTES
ANTISEIZURE MEDICATION (ASM) CYP INDUCERS Phenytoin, phenobarbital, primidone, carbamazepine, oxcarbazepine + **Other drugs metabolized by CYP enzymes** Carbamazepine (auto-inducer, induces its own metabolism), other ASMs, oral contraceptives, others	↑ substrate (drug) metabolism will cause ↓ drug levels. ↓ drug effects; with ASMs, loss of seizure control.	Monitor drug levels; induction takes up to 4 weeks for the full effect. Consider increasing the dose of the substrate drug. If substrate is lamotrigine, use the starter kit that begins with higher lamotrigine doses.
RIFAMPIN **+ CYP and P-gp substrates**	↑ substrate (drug) metabolism will cause ↓ drug levels.	Monitor drug levels or other appropriate monitoring parameters, such as an INR with warfarin. Increase the dose of the substrate drug as necessary.
CYP3A4 INDUCERS + **Opioids that are CYP3A4 substrates** Fentanyl, hydrocodone, oxycodone, methadone	↑ metabolism results in ↓ opioid concentration; analgesia (pain relief) will decrease.	Assess the patient's use of breakthrough pain medication to determine if an increased maintenance dose is necessary. Use caution; opioids cause respiratory depression when overdosed, and induction has a lag time.
CYP3A4, P-GP INDUCERS + **Calcineurin inhibitors (CNIs)** Tacrolimus, cyclosporine **or** **mTOR kinase inhibitors** Sirolimus, everolimus	↑ drug metabolism results in ↓ transplant drug level and ↑ risk of transplant (organ) rejection.	Avoid using together or ↑ dose of CNI or mTOR kinase inhibitor carefully. Monitor transplant drug levels for efficacy.
SMOKING Primarily induces CYP1A2; includes smoking tobacco and marijuana + **Some antipsychotics, antidepressants, hypnotics, anxiolytics, caffeine, theophylline, warfarin (R-isomer)**	**Current smoker** CYP1A2 substrates (i.e., drugs) will have ↓ levels.	When a current smoker starts a drug that is a CYP1A2 substrate, a higher dose can be required.
	Smokers who quit When the inducer (cigarettes) is stopped, drug concentrations of CYP1A2 substrates will ↑, causing toxicity.	Counsel/advocate for smoking cessation. When a smoker quits, monitor the INR if taking warfarin; the R-isomer of warfarin (less potent isomer) is metabolized by CYP1A2, but the therapeutic range is narrow and could be affected. Nicotine replacement products (NRT, such as the patch and gum) do not induce CYP enzymes.

DRUGS WITH ADDITIVE RISK

ADDITIVE SIDE EFFECT	RISK	ACTIONS BY PHARMACIST/NOTES
SEROTONERGIC TOXICITY		
Antidepressants SSRIs, SNRIs, TCAs, mirtazapine, trazodone **MAO inhibitors** Antidepressants: isocarboxazid, phenelzine, tranylcypromine Selective MAO-B inhibitors: selegiline, rasagiline Others: linezolid, methylene blue **Opioids** Fentanyl, meperidine, methadone, tramadol, tapentadol (though there is risk when any opioid is used in combination with serotonergic drugs) **Triptans** Occasional (PRN) triptan use may be safe; more frequent use can increase risk **Natural products** St. John's wort, L-tryptophan **Others** Buspirone, lithium, dextromethorphan (when taken in excess as a drug of abuse)	Serotonin syndrome risk increases when two or more drugs that affect serotonin are used together. Higher doses ↑ risk. Symptoms range from mild to severe and fatal: ■ Autonomic dysfunction (diaphoresis, nausea, vomiting, hyperthermia) ■ Altered mental status (akathisia, anxiety, agitation, delirium) ■ Neuromuscular excitation (hyperreflexia, tremor, rigidity, tonic-clonic seizures)	Avoid using serotonergic drugs together; if used, doses should be within recommended ranges. Check for inhibitors of serotonergic drugs. Counsel patients to report symptoms, even if mild. If severe symptoms, counsel to go to the emergency department. Recommend eliminating an initial serotonergic drug prior to starting a new serotonergic drug by using a washout period: use 2 weeks between the drugs, or use 5 weeks for drugs with a longer duration of action, such as fluoxetine.
BLEEDING		
Anticoagulants Warfarin, dabigatran, apixaban, edoxaban, rivaroxaban, heparin, enoxaparin, dalteparin, fondaparinux, argatroban, bivalirudin **Antiplatelets** Salicylates (including aspirin), dipyridamole, clopidogrel, prasugrel, ticagrelor **NSAIDs** Ibuprofen, naproxen, diclofenac, indomethacin, others **SSRIs, SNRIs** Citalopram, escitalopram, fluoxetine, paroxetine, sertraline, duloxetine, venlafaxine, others **Natural products** 5G's: garlic, ginger, ginkgo biloba, ginseng, glucosamine Vitamin E, willow bark, fish oils (high doses)	↑ bleeding risk; can occur with or without changing an anticoagulation monitoring parameter, such as the INR (with warfarin).	Avoid using in combination, with a few exceptions: ■ Aspirin (for cardioprotection) and occasional NSAID use for pain, fever or inflammation. ■ SSRI/SNRI use and occasional NSAID use for pain, fever or inflammation. ■ Dual antiplatelet therapy may be recommended for select patients (e.g., to prevent cardiac stent thrombosis). ■ Bridging/overlap treatment, such as enoxaparin + warfarin, until INR therapeutic ≥ 24 hours.

ADDITIVE SIDE EFFECT	RISK	ACTIONS BY PHARMACIST/NOTES
HYPERKALEMIA		
Renin-angiotensin-aldosterone system (RAAS) drugs ACE inhibitors, ARBs, sacubitril/valsartan, aliskiren, spironolactone, eplerenone (highest risk with ARBs) **Potassium-sparing diuretics** Amiloride, triamterene **Others** Salt substitutes (KCl), calcineurin inhibitors (tacrolimus and cyclosporine), SMX/TMP, canagliflozin, drospirenone-containing oral contraceptives	Hyperkalemia; symptoms include weakness, heart palpitations, arrhythmia. Higher risk with renal impairment.	Do not use ACE inhibitors with ARBs. Do not use sacubitril/valsartan with ACE inhibitors or ARBs. If risk of hyperkalemia, suggest alternatives to canagliflozin (for diabetes), SMX/TMP (for infection) or drospirenone-containing oral contraceptives. Counsel patient to avoid salt substitutes that contain KCl. Monitor potassium.
QT PROLONGATION		
Antiarrhythmics Class 1a, 1c and III (see Arrhythmias chapter) **Anti-infectives** Antimalarials (e.g., hydroxychloroquine) Azole antifungals, except isavuconazonium Lefamulin Macrolides Quinolones **Antidepressants** SSRIs: highest risk with citalopram, escitalopram TCAs Others: mirtazapine, trazodone, venlafaxine **Antipsychotics** First-generation (e.g., haloperidol, thioridazine) Second-generation: highest risk with ziprasidone **Antiemetics** 5-HT3 receptor antagonists (e.g., ondansetron) Others: droperidol, metoclopramide, promethazine **Oncology medications** Androgen deprivation therapy (e.g., leuprolide) Tyrosine kinase inhibitors (e.g., nilotinib) Arsenic trioxide **Others** Cilostazol, donepezil, fingolimod, hydroxyzine, loperamide, ranolazine, solifenacin, methadone	QT prolongation ↑ the risk of torsades de pointes (TdP), an often fatal arrhythmia. The risk increases with: ■ Higher doses. ■ Higher drug levels due to concurrent enzyme inhibitors. ■ Higher drug levels due to reduced drug clearance, such as with renal or liver disease. ■ Multiple QT-prolonging drugs used together. ■ Elderly (> 60 years) and patients with CVD, including arrhythmias, HF, MI.	With all QT-prolonging drugs, avoid/reduce risk of TdP: ■ Limit use of QT-prolonging drugs or select drugs with lower QT risk, especially with arrhythmias, CVD or CVD risk (exception: amiodarone is the drug of choice to treat an arrhythmia in patients with HF). ■ Carefully dose QT-prolonging drugs; use lower doses/caution in elderly patients. □ Do not exceed citalopram 40 mg daily or 20 mg daily in elderly (> 60 years), liver disease or with enzyme inhibitors that decrease clearance. □ Do not exceed escitalopram 20 mg daily or 10 mg daily in elderly. □ Among SSRIs, sertraline is considered safest in patients with CVD. ■ Avoid concurrent QT-prolonging drugs, if possible. ■ Avoid use of inhibitors that block a QT-prolonging drug's metabolism. ■ Do not use droperidol for inpatient N/V (droperidol is injection only and has restricted use due to QT prolongation risk).

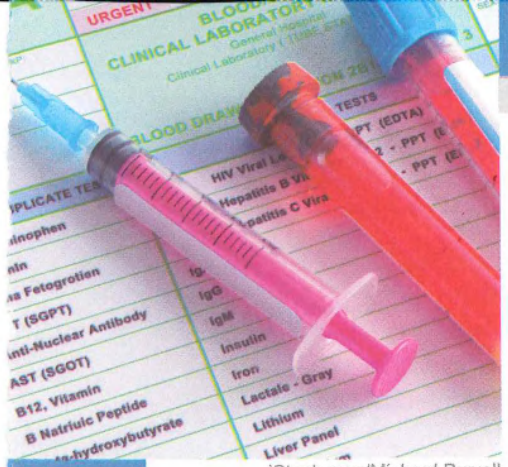
ADDITIVE SIDE EFFECT	RISK	ACTIONS BY PHARMACIST/NOTES
CNS DEPRESSION		
Many Drugs/Drug Classes Opioids Skeletal muscle relaxants Antiseizure medication Benzodiazepines Barbiturates Hypnotics Antidepressants: mirtazapine, trazodone Antihypertensives: propranolol, clonidine Cannabis-related drugs: dronabinol, nabilone Sedating antihistamines Cough syrups with an antihistamine or opioid Some NSAIDs **Highest risk for fatality when used in combination:** Opioids + Benzodiazepines or other CNS depressants	CNS depressant-effects: somnolence, dizziness, confusion, cognitive impairment, altered consciousness, delirium, gait instability/imbalance/risk of falls/accidents, including motor vehicle accidents. Benzodiazepines are drugs of abuse, and are often prescribed inappropriately (for anxiety or insomnia), adding unnecessary risk of CNS depression. Benzodiazepines are appropriate for status epilepticus, alcohol withdrawal, as an antidote for stimulant overdose, prior to medical procedures, in acute high-anxiety situations and for anticipatory emesis with chemotherapy. Opioids: due to the risks of abuse, dependence and addiction, reserve for severe pain that is not responsive to other measures.	Provide patient counseling: ■ Do not use alcohol. ■ Do not operate a car or other vehicles/machines. ■ Can increase risk of falls, confusion. Monitor for sedation, slow and shallow breathing, and shortness of breath. Avoid combining CNS depressants when possible. Suggest alternatives for anxiety (e.g., SSRI, SNRI), insomnia (lifestyle treatments preferred) or pain (e.g., acetaminophen, NSAIDs, antidepressants). **For opioids specifically:** ■ Do not use in combination with benzodiazepines; use of other CNS depressants, including alcohol, have a high risk of fatality with opioids. ■ Extended-release formulations have additional risk: several become shorter-acting when taken with alcohol, which increases the risk of fatality. ■ Recommend naloxone for at-risk patients, including use of high doses, rapid dose increases or reduced clearance (e.g., renal impairment with morphine). ■ Avoid codeine if pharmacogenomic profile is unknown (highest risk with CYP2D6 UMs). ■ See other CYP3A4 and 2D6 interaction information discussed previously.
OTOTOXICITY		
Aminoglycosides Gentamicin, tobramycin, amikacin, others **Cisplatin** **Loop diuretics (especially rapid IV administration)** Furosemide, bumetanide, ethacrynic acid **Salicylates** Aspirin, salsalate, magnesium salicylate, others **Vancomycin**	Hearing loss, tinnitus, vertigo.	■ Consider an audiology consult at start of treatment for baseline hearing assessment; continue to monitor. ■ Avoid using multiple ototoxic drugs at the same time, when possible.

ADDITIVE SIDE EFFECT	RISK	ACTIONS BY PHARMACIST/NOTES
NEPHROTOXICITY		
Anti-infectives Aminoglycosides, amphotericin B, polymyxins, vancomycin **Cisplatin** **Calcineurin inhibitors** Cyclosporine, tacrolimus **Loop diuretics** Furosemide, torsemide, bumetanide, ethacrynic acid **NSAIDs** **Radiographic-contrast dye**	Worsening renal function/acute renal failure (ARF), can be evidenced by ↓ in urine output and ↑ SCr/BUN.	■ Cisplatin: use amifostine to protect kidneys. ■ Maintain adequate hydration (dehydration can worsen kidney function). ■ Monitor drug levels (e.g., tacrolimus, aminoglycosides, vancomycin), as appropriate. ■ Discontinue offending drugs if acute renal failure occurs. ■ Monitor urine output, SCr/BUN.
ANTICHOLINERGIC TOXICITY		
Antidepressants/antipsychotics Paroxetine, TCAs, first-generation antipsychotics **Sedating antihistamines** Diphenhydramine, brompheniramine, chlorpheniramine, doxylamine, hydroxyzine, cyproheptadine, meclizine **Centrally-acting anticholinergics** Benztropine, trihexyphenidyl **Muscle relaxants** Baclofen, carisoprodol, cyclobenzaprine **Antimuscarinics (for urinary incontinence)** Oxybutynin, darifenacin, tolterodine **Others** Atropine, belladonna, dicyclomine	Anticholinergic symptoms: CNS depression, sedation, dry mouth, dry eyes, blurry vision, urinary retention, constipation. Highest risk in elderly.	■ Recommend alternatives to sedating antihistamines, such as loratadine, fexofenadine, cetirizine, or suggest saline nasal spray/drops that clear allergens out of the nasal passages. ■ If using diphenhydramine or other sedating antihistamines for sleep, suggest lifestyle changes (sleep hygiene). ■ Recommend treatments for dry mouth, dry eyes (see Sjogren's Syndrome in the Systemic Steroids & Autoimmune Conditions chapter); recommend laxatives for constipation (see Constipation & Diarrhea chapter).
HYPOTENSION/ORTHOSTASIS		
PDE-5 inhibitors Sildenafil, tadalafil, avanafil, vardenafil **+** **CYP3A4 inhibitors** **or** **Nitrates** **or** **Alpha-1 blockers** Non-selective (e.g., doxazosin, terazosin) or selective (e.g., tamsulosin)	With CYP3A4 inhibitors: ↓ PDE-5 inhibitor metabolism causes ↑ side effects, including headache, dizziness, flushing (causing ↑ risk of falls/injury). PDE-5 inhibitors, nitrates and alpha-1 blockers all cause vasodilation. Additive effects can lead to hypotension/orthostasis, dizziness and falls. With nitrates, severe hypotension can cause chest pain and CV events, which can be fatal.	**If taking a CYP3A4 inhibitor** ■ Start with half the usual starting dose of the PDE-5 inhibitor (see Sexual Dysfunction chapter). **PDE-5 inhibitors and nitrates** ■ Do not use together (contraindicated); check for use of sublingual nitroglycerin PRN for chest pain; can consider use of nitroglycerin in emergent situations (UA/NSTEMI/STEMI) with close monitoring. **PDE-5 inhibitors and alpha-1 blockers** ■ Start with a low dose when adding a drug from either class (e.g., if taking an alpha-1 blocker, start at half the usual PDE-5 inhibitor starting dose). Do not start a PDE-5 inhibitor unless stable (e.g., no symptoms of hypotension) on an alpha-1 blocker.

CYP450 ENZYMES: COMMON SUBSTRATES, INDUCERS AND INHIBITORS

CYP	SUBSTRATES	INDUCERS	INHIBITORS
3A4	**Analgesics** (buprenorphine, diclofenac, fentanyl, hydrocodone, meloxicam, methadone, oxycodone, tramadol) **Anticoagulants** (apixaban, rivaroxaban, R-warfarin) **Cardiovascular drugs** (amiodarone, amlodipine, bosentan, diltiazem, eplerenone, ivabradine, nifedipine, quinidine, ranolazine, tolvaptan, verapamil) **Immunosuppressants** (cyclosporine, tacrolimus, sirolimus) **Statins** (atorvastatin, lovastatin, simvastatin) **Key HIV drugs** (atazanavir, efavirenz, other NNRTIs, ritonavir, tipranavir) **PDE-5 inhibitors** (avanafil, sildenafil, tadalafil, vardenafil) **Others** (alfuzosin, aprepitant, aripiprazole, benzodiazepines, brexpiprazole, buspirone, carbamazepine, citalopram, clarithromycin, colchicine, dapsone, dutasteride, erythromycin, escitalopram, ethinyl estradiol, felbamate, haloperidol, ketoconazole, levonorgestrel, mirtazapine, modafinil, ondansetron, progesterone, quetiapine, tamoxifen, trazodone, venlafaxine, zolpidem)	Carbamazepine, efavirenz, etravirine, oxcarbazepine, phenobarbital, phenytoin, primidone, rifabutin, rifampin, rifapentine, smoking, St. John's wort	**Anti-infectives** (clarithromycin, erythromycin, azole antifungals, isoniazid) **Cardiovascular drugs** (amiodarone, diltiazem, dronedarone, quinidine, ranolazine, verapamil) **Key HIV drugs** (cobicistat, efavirenz, ritonavir and other protease inhibitors) **Others** (aprepitant, cimetidine, cyclosporine, fluvoxamine, grapefruit juice, haloperidol, nefazodone, sertraline)
1A2	Alosetron, amiodarone, aprepitant, clozapine, cyclobenzaprine, duloxetine, ethinyl estradiol, fluvoxamine, methadone, mirtazapine, olanzapine, ondansetron, pimozide, propranolol, rasagiline, ropinirole, theophylline, tizanidine, R-warfarin, zolpidem	Carbamazepine, phenobarbital, phenytoin, primidone, rifampin, ritonavir, smoking, St. John's wort	Atazanavir, cimetidine, ciprofloxacin, fluvoxamine, zileuton
2C8	Amiodarone, pioglitazone, repaglinide	Phenytoin, rifampin	Amiodarone, atazanavir, clopidogrel, gemfibrozil, ketoconazole, trimethoprim/sulfamethoxazole, ritonavir

CYP	SUBSTRATES	INDUCERS	INHIBITORS
2C9	Alosetron, carvedilol, celecoxib, diazepam, diclofenac, fluvastatin, glyburide, glipizide, glimepiride, meloxicam, nateglinide, phenytoin, ramelteon, S-warfarin, tamoxifen, zolpidem	Aprepitant, carbamazepine, phenobarbital, phenytoin, primidone, rifampin, rifapentine, ritonavir, smoking, St. John's wort	Amiodarone, atazanavir, capecitabine, cimetidine, efavirenz, etravirine, gemfibrozil, fluconazole, fluvoxamine, fluorouracil, isoniazid, ketoconazole, metronidazole, oritavancin, tamoxifen, SMX/TMP, valproic acid, voriconazole, zafirlukast
2C19	Amiodarone, clopidogrel, phenytoin, thioridazine, voriconazole	Carbamazepine, phenobarbital, phenytoin, rifampin	Cimetidine, esomeprazole, efavirenz, etravirine, fluoxetine, fluvoxamine, isoniazid, ketoconazole, modafinil, omeprazole, topiramate, voriconazole
2D6	**Analgesics** (codeine, hydrocodone, meperidine, methadone, oxycodone, tramadol) **Antipsychotics/antidepressants** (aripiprazole, brexpiprazole, doxepin, fluoxetine, haloperidol, mirtazapine, risperidone, thioridazine, trazodone, tricyclic antidepressants, venlafaxine) **Others** (amiodarone, atomoxetine, carvedilol, dextromethorphan, flecainide, methamphetamine, metoprolol, propafenone, propranolol, tamoxifen)		Amiodarone, bupropion, cimetidine, cobicistat, darifenacin, dronedarone, duloxetine, fluoxetine, mirabegron, paroxetine, propafenone, quinidine, ritonavir, sertraline



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PHARMACY FOUNDATIONS PART 1

CHAPTER 4

LAB VALUES & DRUG MONITORING

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BACKGROUND

Laboratory values assist healthcare providers in diagnosing and monitoring diseases and drug therapies. Blood or other samples can be sent to a hospital or outside laboratory for analysis. Alternatively, point-of-care (POC) testing provides rapid results at the site of patient care. There are many POC tests, including tests for cardiac enzymes, A1C, INR, and various infections. Home testing kits, many of which are available OTC, provide convenience and privacy. These kits are available to test for pregnancy, ovulation, HIV infection, herpes, fecal occult blood or the presence of illicit substances or opioids, among others.

Therapeutic drug monitoring (TDM) involves obtaining a drug level or other relevant labs to monitor efficacy and safety. TDM is reviewed in detail at the end of this chapter.

Pharmacists in many states can order and interpret lab tests for a variety of purposes, including screening for and diagnosing disease, monitoring drug levels and other related lab values, checking for medication adherence or screening for drugs of abuse.

DEFINITIONS

COMPLETE BLOOD COUNT

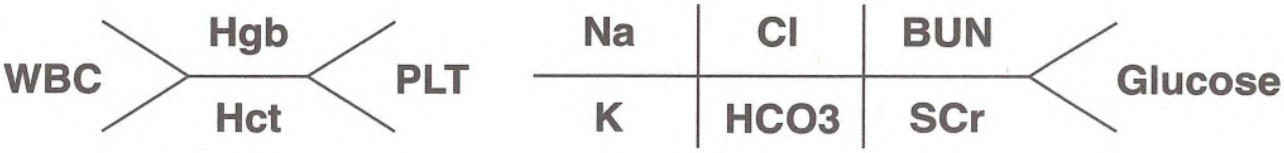
The complete blood count (CBC) is a commonly ordered lab panel that analyzes white blood cells (WBCs), red blood cells (RBCs) and platelets (PLTs). The CBC includes hemoglobin (oxygen-carrying protein in RBCs) and hematocrit (the level of RBCs in the fluid component of the blood, or plasma). When a CBC with differential is ordered, the types of WBCs are analyzed.

BASIC METABOLIC PANEL/COMPREHENSIVE METABOLIC PANEL

The basic metabolic panel (BMP) includes seven to eight tests that analyze electrolytes, glucose, renal function and acid/base (with HCO3, or bicarbonate) status. Some labs calculate and report an anion gap along with the BMP (see Calculations IV chapter).

A comprehensive metabolic panel (CMP) includes the tests in a BMP plus albumin, alanine aminotransferase (ALT), aspartate aminotransferase (AST), total bilirubin and total protein. The additional tests are used primarily to assess liver function. The BMP and CMP are groups of labs that are ordered together for convenience.

The stick diagrams below are used in practice when writing a paper chart note to denote the primary components of the CBC or BMP. Pharmacists should know which values are contained in the stick diagrams below.

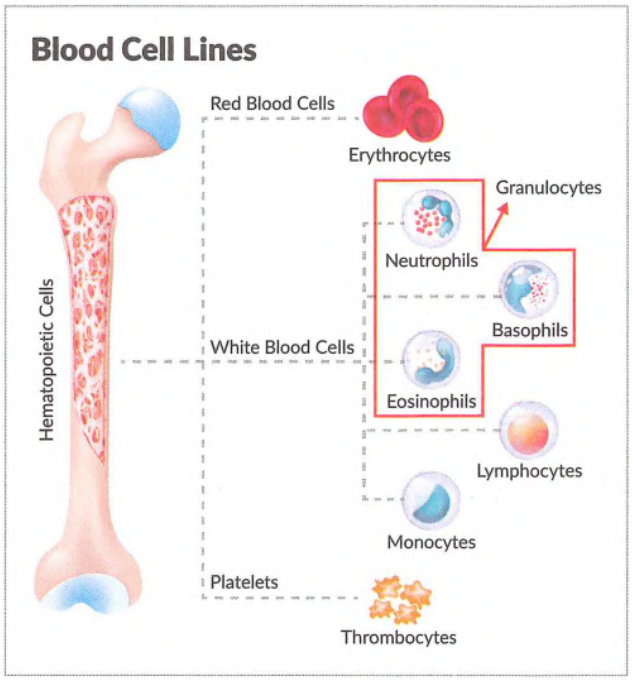


BLOOD CELL LINES

Stem cells in the bone marrow produce red blood cells, white blood cells and platelets (see figure). White blood cells can be called leukocytes, and red blood cells can be called erythrocytes. An immature red blood cell is called a reticulocyte (discussed in the Anemia section of the Common Laboratory Reference Ranges table).

CHANGES IN BLOOD CELL LINES

Increase in Individual Cell Lines	
↑ WBC	Leukocytosis
↑ RBC	Polycythemia
↑ Platelets	Thrombocytosis
Decrease in Individual Cell Lines	
↓ WBC	Leukopenia
↓ RBC (or ↓ Hgb)	Anemia
↓ Platelets	Thrombocytopenia
Decrease in Multiple Cell Lines	
Myelosuppression	↓ WBCs, RBCs and platelets
Agranulocytosis	↓ granulocytes (WBCs that have secretory granules in the cytoplasm); includes ↓ neutrophils, basophils and eosinophils Drug causes: clozapine, propylthiouracil, methimazole, procainamide, carbamazepine, isoniazid, sulfamethoxazole/trimethoprim



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LAB RESULTS

Lab results are usually reported as a numerical value (e.g., sodium = 139 mEq/L) or as "positive" or "negative" or indicate a specific finding, such as "gram-positive cocci." Reference ranges can vary slightly from one facility to another (due to slight variances in products and techniques) and between pediatric and adult populations. A patient's lab results may be within the reference ranges (normal) or outside of the reference ranges (can indicate a condition that needs to be addressed). A value that is termed critical can be life-threatening unless corrective action is taken quickly. The Joint Commission requires that all accredited facilities create and follow a protocol to identify and report critical values to the responsible healthcare provider, who has an established time frame to manage the result. This applies to critical lab values and diagnostic procedure results.

Reference ranges for labs are generally provided on the NAPLEX, but may not be provided on the California Practice Standards and Jurisprudence Exam (CPJE). Familiarity with lab tests and their interpretation will greatly reduce the time required to evaluate cases on the exam. "Must know" labs for pharmacists are bolded in the following table, though others may be included in patient cases. The common reference range for a healthy adult is provided unless otherwise noted. Drugs specifically indicated to treat a lab abnormality (e.g., urate-lowering therapies) are included in the respective chapters (e.g., the Gout chapter). Studying this table will be much easier after mastering all of the associated disease state chapters in this book.

COMMON LABORATORY REFERENCE RANGES – ADULT

ITEM	REFERENCE RANGE	NOTES
BMP and Electrolytes		
Calcium (Ca), total Ca, ionized	8.5–10.5 mg/dL 4.5–5.1 mg/dL	Calculate corrected calcium if albumin is low (see Calculations III chapter). Correction is not needed for ionized calcium. ↑ due to calcium supplementation, vitamin D, thiazide diuretics. ↓ due to long-term heparin, loop diuretics, bisphosphonates, cinacalcet, systemic steroids, calcitonin, foscarnet, topiramate. Supplement calcium in pregnancy, osteoporosis/osteopenia and with certain drugs (see Dietary Supplements, Natural & Complementary Medicine chapter).
Chloride (Cl)	95–106 mEq/L	Used with other labs to assess acid-base status and fluid balance.
Magnesium (Mg)	1.3–2.1 mEq/L	↑ due to magnesium-containing antacids and laxatives (higher risk with renal impairment). ↓ due to PPIs, diuretics, amphotericin B, echinocandins, foscarnet, diarrhea, chronic alcohol intake.
Phosphate (PO4)	2.3–4.7 mg/dL	↑ in chronic kidney disease. ↓ due to phosphate binders, foscarnet, oral calcium intake.
Potassium (K)	3.5–5 mEq/L	↑ due to ACE inhibitors, ARBs, aldosterone receptor antagonists, aliskiren, canagliflozin, cyclosporine, tacrolimus, potassium supplements, sulfamethoxazole/trimethoprim, drospirenone-containing oral contraceptives, chronic heparin use, mycophenolate, NSAIDs, pentamidine. ↓ due to beta-2 agonists, diuretics, insulin, sodium polystyrene sulfonate, steroids, conivaptan, mycophenolate.
Sodium (Na)	135–145 mEq/L	↑ due to hypertonic saline, tolvaptan, conivaptan. ↓ due to carbamazepine, oxcarbazepine, SSRIs, diuretics, desmopressin. Sodium level may require correction when hyperglycemia is present (see Diabetes chapter).
Bicarbonate (HCO3 or "bicarb")	Venous: 24–30 mEq/L Arterial: 22–26 mEq/L (varies by method)	Used to assess acid-base status. ↑ due to loop diuretics, systemic steroids. ↓ due to topiramate, zonisamide, salicylate overdose.
Blood Urea Nitrogen (BUN)	7–20 mg/dL	↑ in renal impairment and dehydration. Used with SCr (e.g., BUN:SCr ratio) to assess fluid status and renal function.
Serum Creatinine (SCr)	0.6–1.3 mg/dL	↑ due to many drugs that impair renal function (e.g., NSAIDs, loop diuretics, aminoglycosides, amphotericin B, cisplatin, colistimethate, cyclosporine, polymyxin, radiocontrast dye, tacrolimus, vancomycin). False ↑ due to sulfamethoxazole/trimethoprim, H2RAs, cobicistat. ↓ with low muscle mass, amputation, hemodilution.
Glucose	70-110 mg/dL	See Diabetes section of this table for additional details.
Anion Gap (AG)	5–12 mEq/L	A calculated value, but often reported on the BMP. ↑ anion gap suggests metabolic acidosis (see Calculations IV chapter).

ITEM	REFERENCE RANGE	NOTES
WBC Count and Differential		
White Blood Cells (WBCs)	4,000–11,000 cells/mm^3	Used to diagnose and monitor infection/inflammation. Can ↑ as an acute phase reactant, indicating a systemic reaction to inflammation or stress (e.g., surgery). ↑ due to systemic steroids, colony-stimulating factors, epinephrine. ↓ due to clozapine, chemotherapy that targets the bone marrow, carbamazepine, cephalosporins, immunosuppressants (e.g., DMARDs, biologics), procainamide, vancomycin.
Neutrophils	45–73%	Neutrophils and bands are used with clinical signs and symptoms to assess the likelihood of acute infection. They are also used (with WBCs) in the absolute neutrophil count (ANC) calculation to assess for neutropenia (see Calculations IV, Oncology chapters).
Bands	3–5%	Neutrophils are also called polymorphonuclear cells (PMNs or polys) or segmented neutrophils (segs). Bands are immature neutrophils released from the bone marrow to fight infection (called a "left shift" when elevated).
Eosinophils	0–5%	↑ in drug allergy, asthma, inflammation, parasitic infection.
Basophils	0–1%	↑ in inflammation, hypersensitivity reactions, leukemia.
Lymphocytes	20–40%	↑ in viral infections, lymphoma. ↓ in bone marrow suppression, HIV or due to systemic steroids.
Monocytes	2–8%	↑ in chronic infections, inflammation, stress.
Anemia		
Red Blood Cells (RBCs)	Males: $4.5–5.5 \times 10^6$ cells/µL Females: $4.1–4.9 \times 10^6$ cells/µL	RBCs have an average life span of 120 days. ↑ due to erythropoiesis-stimulating agents (ESAs), smoking and polycythemia (a condition that causes high RBCs). ↓ due to chemotherapy that targets the bone marrow, low production, blood loss, deficiency anemias (e.g., B12, folate), hemolytic anemia, sickle cell anemia.
Hemoglobin (Hgb, Hb)	Males: 13.5–18 g/dL Females: 12–16 g/dL	Hgb is the iron-containing protein that carries oxygen in RBCs. The Hct mirrors the Hgb result (providing the same clinical information). ↑ due to ESAs (see Anemia chapter). ↓ in anemias and bleeding (drug-induced causes include anticoagulants, antiplatelets, fibrinolytics).
Hematocrit (Hct)	Males: 38–50% Females: 36–46%	
Mean Corpuscular Volume (MCV)	80–100 fL	Reflects the size and average volume of RBCs. ↑ (macrocytic anemia) due to B12 or folate deficiency. ↓ (microcytic anemia) due to iron deficiency.
Mean Corpuscular Hemoglobin (MCH)	26–34 pg/cell	Additional tests used in an anemia workup. Together MCV, MCHC and RDW are called "RBC indices."
Mean Corpuscular Hgb Concentration (MCHC)	31–37 g/dL	
RBC Distribution Width (RDW)	11.5–14.5%	RDW measures the variability in RBC size.

ITEM	REFERENCE RANGE	NOTES
Iron	65–150 mcg/dL	↑ due to iron supplementation. ↓ due to blood loss or poor nutrition.
Total Iron Binding Capacity (TIBC)	250–400 mcg/dL	Monitored as part of the workup and treatment for iron deficiency anemia or anemia of chronic disease (e.g., CKD). See Anemia chapter for details.
Transferrin	> 200 mg/dL	
Transferrin Saturation (TSAT)	Males: 15–50% Females: 12–45%	
Ferritin	11–300 ng/mL	
Erythropoietin	2–25 mIU/mL	
Folic Acid (folate)	5–25 mcg/L	B12 and folate are part of the workup of macrocytic anemia. ↓ due to phenytoin/fosphenytoin, phenobarbital, primidone, methotrexate, sulfamethoxazole/trimethoprim, sulfasalazine. Supplement folate in women of childbearing age and alcohol use disorder (see Dietary Supplements, Natural & Complementary Medicine chapter).
Vitamin B12	> 200 pg/mL	↓ due to PPIs, metformin, colchicine, chloramphenicol.
Methylmalonic acid (MMA)	Varies	Used for further workup of macrocytic anemia when B12 deficiency is suspected.
Reticulocyte Count	0.5–2.5%	Measures the amount of reticulocytes (immature red blood cells) being made by the bone marrow. ↑ with blood loss and hemolysis. ↓ in untreated anemia, due to iron, folate or B12 deficiency, and with bone marrow suppression.
Coombs Test, Direct Also known as: Direct Antiglobulin Test (DAT)	Negative	Used in the diagnosis of immune-mediated hemolytic anemia (see Anemia chapter). Drugs that can cause immune-mediated hemolytic anemia include penicillins and cephalosporins (prolonged use/high concentrations), isoniazid, levodopa, methyldopa, quinidine, quinine, rifampin and sulfonamides. If a drug-induced cause is suspected and the Coombs test is positive, discontinue the offending drug.
Glucose-6-Phosphate Dehydrogenase (G6PD)	5–14 units/gram	Used to determine if hemolytic anemia is due to G6PD deficiency (see Anemia chapter). RBC destruction with G6PD deficiency is triggered by stress, foods (fava beans) or these drugs: dapsone, methylene blue, nitrofurantoin, pegloticase, primaquine, rasburicase, quinidine, quinine, and sulfonamides.
Anticoagulation **These tests evaluate different aspects of clotting and are used to monitor specific drugs.**		
Anti-Factor Xa Activity (Anti-Xa)	Therapeutic doses of LMWH (peak): 1.0-2.0 IU/mL Unfractionated heparin: 0.3-0.7 IU/mL	Used to monitor low molecular weight heparins (LMWHs) and unfractionated heparin (UFH). For monitoring LMWH, obtain a peak anti-Xa level 4 hours after a SC LMWH dose. For UFH, obtain 6 hours after IV infusion starts and every 6 hours until therapeutic. Monitoring for LMWH is recommended in pregnancy and may be used in obesity, low body weight, pediatrics, elderly, renal insufficiency (see Anticoagulation chapter).

ITEM	REFERENCE RANGE	NOTES
Prothrombin Time/ International Normalized Ratio (PT / INR)	PT: 10–13 seconds (varies) INR: < 1.2 (if not on warfarin)	Used to monitor warfarin. INR ↑ (without taking warfarin) is typically due to liver disease. False ↑ can occur with daptomycin, oritavancin, telavancin. Drug interactions can ↑ or ↓ INR (see Anticoagulation chapter).
Activated Partial Thromboplastin Time (aPTT or PTT)	22–38 seconds (varies, this is called the "control") Goal (on UFH): 1.5–2.5× control	Used to monitor UFH and parenteral direct thrombin inhibitors (e.g., argatroban). UFH: obtain 6 hours after IV infusion starts and every 6 hours until therapeutic. False ↑ can occur with oritavancin, telavancin.
Activated Clotting Time (ACT)	70–180 seconds (varies)	Used to monitor anticoagulation in the cardiac catheterization lab during percutaneous coronary intervention (PCI) and surgery.
Platelets (PLTs)	150,000–450,000 cells/ mm^3	Platelets have an average life span of 7-10 days and are required for clot formation. Spontaneous bleeding can occur when platelets are < 20,000 cells/mm^3. ↓ due to heparin, LMWHs, fondaparinux, glycoprotein IIb/IIIa receptor antagonists, linezolid, valproic acid, chemotherapy that targets the bone marrow.
Heparin-Induced Platelet Antibodies: ELISA test 1st, then an SRA (serotonin release assay)	Negative	Heparin-induced thrombocytopenia (HIT) is suspected when platelets drop > 50% from baseline as a result of treatment with UFH or LMWH. Antibody testing is used to confirm a diagnosis of HIT. If the ELISA test is positive, a positive SRA is confirmatory.
Liver and Gastroenterology		
Albumin	3.5–5 g/dL	↓ due to cirrhosis and malnutrition. Serum levels of highly protein-bound drugs (e.g., warfarin, calcium, phenytoin) are impacted by low albumin. Phenytoin and calcium serum concentrations require correction for low albumin (see Seizures/Epilepsy, Pharmacokinetics and Calculations III chapters). A "free" phenytoin level or ionized calcium does not require adjustment.
Alkaline Phosphatase (Alk Phos or ALP)	33–131 IU/L	Used with other labs to assess liver, biliary tract (cholestatic) and bone disease.
Aspartate Aminotransferase (AST)	10–40 units/L	AST and ALT are enzymes released from injured hepatocytes (liver cells). Numerous medications and herbals can ↑ AST and ALT (see Hepatitis & Liver Disease chapter).
Alanine Aminotransferase (ALT)	10–40 units/L	
Gamma-Glutamyl Transpeptidase (GGT)	9–58 units/L	Used with other labs to assess liver, biliary tract (cholestasis) and pancreas.
Bilirubin, total (Tbili)	0.1–1.2 mg/dL	Used along with other liver tests to determine causes of liver damage and detect bile duct blockage.
Ammonia	19–60 mcg/dL	Often measured in suspected hepatic encephalopathy (HE). ↑ due to valproic acid, topiramate. ↓ due to lactulose.

ITEM	REFERENCE RANGE	NOTES
Hepatic (liver) panel AST, ALT, Tbili, Albumin and Alk Phos	See previous	A group of liver function tests (LFTs) ordered together to assess acute and chronic liver inflammation/disease and baseline and routine monitoring of hepatotoxic drugs. The panel can include other tests to evaluate liver function (e.g., PT/INR, total protein).
Cardiovascular		
Creatine Kinase or Creatine Phosphokinase (CK or CPK)	Males: 55–170 IU/L Females: 30–135 IU/L	Used to assess muscle inflammation (myositis), or more serious muscle damage, and to diagnose cardiac conditions. ↑ due to daptomycin, statins, fibrates (especially if given with a statin), emtricitabine, tenofovir, tipranavir, raltegravir, dolutegravir.
CK-MB Isoenzymes, total	≤ 6.0 ng/mL	As a group, these are called "cardiac enzymes." CK-MB, TnT and TnI are used in the diagnosis of MI. Troponins can be elevated with a few other conditions (e.g., sepsis, PE, CKD). BNP and NT-proBNP are both markers of cardiac stress. They are not heart failure (HF) nor heart disease-specific, but higher values indicate a higher likelihood of HF when consistent with HF symptoms. Renal failure is the second most common cause of ↑ BNP and NT-proBNP. Myoglobin and CK-MB are not interchangeable; they are two separate markers. Myoglobin is a sensitive marker for muscle injury but has relatively low specificity for acute MI and is not routinely used for diagnosis (see Acute Coronary Syndromes chapter).
Troponin T (TnT)	0–0.1 ng/mL (assay dependent)	
Troponin I (TnI)	0–0.5 ng/mL (assay dependent)	
B-Type Natriuretic Peptide (BNP)	< 100 pg/mL or ng/L	
N-Terminal-ProBNP (NT-proBNP)	Males: < 61 pg/mL Females: 12–151 pg/mL	
Lipids and Cardiovascular Risk		
Total Cholesterol (TC)	< 200 mg/dL	For complete discussion, see Dyslipidemia chapter. Fasting begins 9-12 hours prior to lipid blood draw. Non-HDL = TC – HDL. Guidelines do not support specific TC, HDL or TG goals; they recommend a statin intensity level for LDL-C reduction based on patient risk. Additional treatments may be added in high-risk patients (e.g., ASCVD) if LDL-C remains elevated (e.g., ≥ 70 mg/dL) on the maximum statin dose tolerated.
Low Density Lipoprotein (LDL)	< 100 mg/dL, desirable	
High Density Lipoprotein (HDL)	< 40 mg/dL, low (male) ≥ 60 mg/dL, desirable	
Non-HDL	< 130 mg/dL, desirable	
Triglycerides (TG)	< 150 mg/dL	
Lipid panel **TC, HDL, LDL, TG**	See above	A group of labs ordered together to assess the major cholesterol types and determine cardiovascular risk. A fasting lipid panel is preferred.
Lipoprotein-a, Lp(a) Apoliprotein-B, Apo B	< 10 mg/dL < 130 mg/dL	↑ Lp(a) and ↑ ApoB are associated with ↑ coagulation and ↑ risk of CVD.
C-reactive Protein (CRP)	0–0.5 mg/dL	↑ CRP indicates inflammation, which could be due to many conditions (infection, trauma, malignancy). Higher levels indicate ↑ risk. High-sensitivity CRP (hs-CRP) is more sensitive for CVD.
Coronary Artery Calcium score	< 300 Agatston units or < 75th percentile for age, sex and ethnicity	The coronary artery calcium score measures calcium build-up in the coronary arteries. A higher score indicates higher risk.
Ankle Brachial Index (ABI)	1–1.4	The ankle brachial index measures the ratio of the BP in the lower legs to the BP in the arms. It is used to assess severity of peripheral artery disease (PAD). An ABI < 1 indicates some degree of PAD.

ITEM	REFERENCE RANGE	NOTES
Diabetes		
Fasting Plasma Glucose (FPG)	≥ 126 mg/dL is positive for diabetes 100–125 mg/dL is positive for prediabetes	Fasting begins ≥ 8 hours prior to the blood draw. See Diabetes chapter for complete discussion and medications that can cause hyper- and hypoglycemia.
Hemoglobin A1C (A1C)	< 7% (ADA), ≤ 6.5% (AACE)	Average blood glucose over the past 3 months; based on attachment of glucose to hemoglobin; ↑ glucose = ↑ BG attached to Hgb = ↑ A1C.
Estimated Average Glucose (eAG)	< 154 mg/dL (ADA)	Used to correlate a finger stick glucose with an A1C; an eAG of 126 mg/dL corresponds to an A1C of 6%.
Preprandial Blood Glucose	80–130 mg/dL (ADA) < 110 mg/dL (AACE)	Blood glucose measurement taken before a meal.
Postprandial Blood Glucose	< 180 mg/dL (ADA) < 140 mg/dL (AACE)	Blood glucose measurement taken after a meal (1-2 hours after the start of eating).
C-Peptide (fasting)	0.78–1.89 ng/mL	Insulin breakdown product used to evaluate beta-cell function (distinguishes type 1 from type 2 diabetes). ↓ or absent in type 1 diabetes.
Urine Albumin to Creatinine Ratio or Albumin to Creatinine Ratio (UACR or ACR) or **Urinary Albumin Excretion (UAE)**	Males: < 17 mg/gram Females: < 25 mg/gram < 30 mg/24 hours	See Diabetes and Renal Disease chapters.
Pancreatic Enzymes		
Amylase	60–180 units/L	↑ in pancreatitis, which can be caused by GLP-1 agonists, DPP-4 inhibitors, valproic acid, hypertriglyceridemia.
Lipase	5–160 units/L	
Thyroid Function		
Thyroid-Stimulating Hormone (TSH)	0.3–3 mIU/L	TSH is used with FT4 to diagnose hypothyroidism and hyperthyroidism, and is used alone (sometimes with FT4) to monitor patients being treated. ↑ TSH = hypothyroidism, ↓ TSH = hyperthyroidism. ↑ or ↓ due to amiodarone, interferons. ↑ (hypothyroidism) due to tyrosine kinase inhibitors, lithium, carbamazepine.
Total Thyroxine (T4)	4.5–10.9 mcg/dL	T4 and FT4 are two of several tests used for a detailed assessment of thyroid function (see Thyroid Disorders chapter).
Free Thyroxine (FT4)	0.9–2.3 ng/dL	
Uric Acid/Gout		
Uric Acid	Males: 3.5–7.2 mg/dL Females: 2–6.5 mg/dL	Used in the diagnosis and treatment of gout. ↑ due to diuretics, niacin, low doses of aspirin, pyrazinamide, cyclosporine, select chemotherapy (due to tumor lysis syndrome).

ITEM	REFERENCE RANGE	NOTES
Inflammation/Autoimmune Disease		
C-Reactive Protein (CRP)	Normal: 0–0.5 mg/dL High risk: > 3 mg/dL	Nonspecific tests used in autoimmune disorders, inflammation, infections. If ANA is positive, an anti-dsDNA test will help establish a diagnosis of systemic lupus erythematosus, which can be drug-induced (see below). Drug-induced lupus erythematosus (DILE) can be caused by many drugs. More likely with anti-TNF agents, hydralazine, isoniazid, methimazole, methyldopa, minocycline, procainamide, propylthiouracil, quinidine, terbinafine. The causative drug must be discontinued (see Systemic Steroids & Autoimmune Conditions chapter).
Rheumatoid Factor (RF)	Negative, or ≤ upper limit of normal (ULN) for the lab (usually < 20 IU/mL)	
Erythrocyte Sedimentation Rate (ESR)	Males: ≤ 20 mm/hr Females: ≤ 30 mm/hr	
Antinuclear Antibodies (ANA)	Negative (titers may be provided)	
Antihistone Antibodies (Detected by ELISA)	Negative	
HIV		
CD4 T Lymphocyte Count	Immunocompromised state: < 200 cells/mm^3	Used to diagnose HIV and monitor treatment (see HIV chapter). CD4 count is an indicator of immune function and helps establish the need for opportunistic infection prophylaxis.
HIV RNA Concentration (Viral Load)	Undetectable Measured in copies/mL	
HIV Antibody (Ab)	Negative (non-reactive)	Detects infection with the virus; may not become positive until several weeks after exposure.
HIV DNA PCR	Negative	Useful for early detection.
HIV p24 Antigen	Undetectable	
Acid-Base (Arterial Sample)		
pH	7.35–7.45	Together these values make up an arterial blood gas (ABG). This blood must be drawn from an artery (not a vein, as with other labs). Often written in chart notes with a stick diagram: pH/pCO2/pO2/HCO3/O2 Sat (see Calculations IV chapter for ABG interpretation). Bicarbonate on the ABG is a calculated value, and the reference range may differ from venous samples (reported with a BMP).
pCO2	35–45 mmHg	
pO2	80–100 mmHg	
HCO3	22–26 mEq/L	
O2 Sat	> 95%	
Respiratory		
Eosinophil Count	< 100 cells/mcL	Used, along with a history of COPD exacerbations, to determine if inhaled corticosteroids will be beneficial in COPD treatment [see Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) chapter].
Hormonal		
Testosterone total, free	Males: 300–950 ng/dL	↑ with testosterone supplementation.
Prostate-Specific Antigen (PSA)	< 4 ng/mL	Can ↑ with testosterone supplementation. Used in detecting prostate cancer and BPH.

ITEM	REFERENCE RANGE	NOTES
Human Chorionic Gonadotropin (hCG)	Varies by test	A positive result from a blood or urine test indicates pregnancy.
Luteinizing Hormone (LH)	Varies during cycle	Rises mid-cycle, causing egg release from the ovaries (ovulation). Tested in urine with ovulation predictor kits for women attempting pregnancy.
Parathyroid Hormone (PTH)	Varies	Used in evaluation of parathyroid disorders, hypercalcemia and chronic kidney disease (CKD) (see Renal Disease chapter).
Other		
Cosyntropin Stimulation Test	Baseline and timed increase are measured	Used to test for adrenal suppression; medications that affect baseline cortisol or suppress adrenal response will impact test and may need to be held prior (e.g., steroids).
Lactic Acid (lactate)	0.5–2.2 mmol/L	Lactic acidosis indicates anaerobic metabolism, which occurs in long-distance running and in certain medical conditions (e.g., sepsis). ↑ due to NRTIs (see HIV chapter), metformin (low risk/mostly with renal disease and heart failure), alcohol use, cyanide.
Procalcitonin	≤ 0.15 ng/mL	↑ due to systemic bacterial infections or severe localized infections.
Prolactin	1–25 ng/mL	Secretion is regulated by dopamine; can ↑ with haloperidol, risperidone, paliperidone, methyldopa. Can ↓ with bromocriptine.
Purified Protein Derivative (PPD) or Tuberculin Skin Test (TST)	No induration (raised area); induration is measured to assess exposure to *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*	Tuberculin skin test (TST) administered by intradermal injection to assess for latent TB. Response is measured by diameter (mm) of induration at 48-72 hours (see ID II: Bacterial Infections chapter).
Interferon-Gamma Release Assay (IGRA)	Negative (for exposure to *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*)	Preferred test (instead of TST/PPD) for most patients (does not require follow-up or cause false-positive result if history of BCG vaccination).
Rapid Plasma Reagin (RPR) or Venereal Diseases Reseach Laboratory (VDRL)	Negative	Non-treponemal antibody tests used to screen for syphilis. If the RPR or VDRL is positive, confirmatory testing with a treponemal assay is performed. Titers may be reported and are used to monitor response to therapy.
Serum Osmolality	275–290 mOsm/kg H2O	Used with Na, BUN/SCr, and clinical volume status to evaluate hypo/hypernatremia. ↑ due to mannitol, toxicities (e.g., ethylene glycol, methanol, propylene glycol).
Thiopurine Methyltransferase (TPMT)	≥ 15 units/mL	Those with a genetic deficiency of TPMT are at ↑ risk for myelosuppression (bone marrow suppression) and may require lower doses of azathioprine and mercaptopurine.
Vitamin D, serum 25(OH)	> 30 ng/mL	↓ levels increase risk of osteoporosis, osteomalacia (rickets), CVD, diabetes, hypertension, infectious diseases and other conditions. Supplement vitamin D with various conditions and drugs.

THERAPEUTIC DRUG MONITORING

Drug levels or other monitoring parameters (e.g., anti-Xa levels for LMWHs) are used to reach dosing goals and avoid toxicity. Therapeutic drug monitoring (TDM) is increasingly common due to the need to target highly resistant infectious organisms and dose medications properly in overweight and obese patients.

The peak level is the highest concentration of a drug in the blood; it requires time for the drug to distribute to body tissues. The trough level is the lowest concentration of a drug in the blood and is drawn right before the next dose or some short period of time before the next dose (30 minutes is common). This allows time to assess the level before another dose is given, so the next dose can be withheld if the level is high. The time that drug levels are drawn is critical for accurate interpretation. For example, a tobramycin level of 6 mcg/mL would be interpreted differently if the level was a trough versus a peak. Obtaining drug levels at steady state is often (but not always) preferred. See the Pharmacokinetics chapter for further discussion.

Narrow therapeutic index (NTI) drugs have a narrow separation between the subtherapeutic (low), therapeutic (desired) and supratherapeutic (high) drug levels. Supratherapeutic drug levels can be toxic.

TDM is commonly performed by pharmacists. The Key Drugs Guy to the right lists drugs that are routinely monitored. Making treatment recommendations based on drug levels is essential for the NAPLEX.

THERAPEUTIC DRUG LEVELS

DRUG	USUAL THERAPEUTIC RANGE
Carbamazepine	4–12 mcg/mL
Digoxin	0.8–2 ng/mL (AF) 0.5–0.9 ng/mL (HF)
Gentamicin (traditional dosing)	Peak: 5–10 mcg/mL Trough: < 2 mcg/mL
Lithium	0.6–1.2 mEq/L (up to 1.5 mEq/L for acute symptoms), drawn as a trough
Phenytoin/ Fosphenytoin	10–20 mcg/mL; if albumin is low, calculate a corrected level
Free Phenytoin	1–2 mcg/mL
Procainamide	4–10 mcg/mL
NAPA (procainamide active metabolite)	15–25 mcg/mL
Combined	10–30 mcg/mL
Theophylline	5–15 mcg/mL
Tobramycin (traditional dosing)	Peak: 5–10 mcg/mL Trough: < 2 mcg/mL
Valproic acid	50–100 mcg/mL (up to 150 mcg/mL in some patients)
Vancomycin	Serious infections (e.g., pneumonia, endocarditis, osteomyelitis): AUC/MIC ratio of 400–600 (recommended) or trough: 15–20 mcg/mL Other infections: trough: 10–15 mcg/mL
Warfarin	Goal INR is 2–3 for most indications, use higher range (2.5–3.5) for high-risk conditions, such as mechanical mitral valves

Select Guidelines/References

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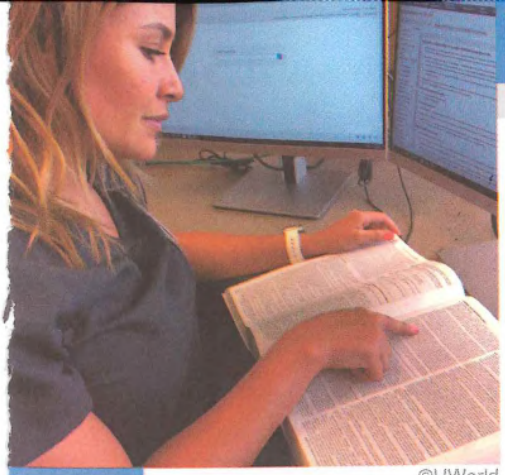

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CHAPTER 5

DRUG REFERENCES

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BACKGROUND

Providing drug information to patients and other healthcare professionals is a critical function of pharmacists, the drug therapy experts. Pharmacists need to select appropriate resources and provide accurate responses that reflect the most current drug information.

This chapter covers the essential content contained in a package insert (PI) and other general drug information resources used in pharmacy practice. It also includes the most common resources for locating specialty healthcare content (e.g., drug shortages, travel vaccines) and consumer information, as well as databases to retrieve clinical studies.

CASE SCENARIO

MJ presents with a prescription for levetiracetam 500 mg tablets by mouth BID for her 5-year-old, 40 lb daughter. She asks the pharmacist a few questions:

- Is the medication dosed properly for her daughter's age and weight?
- Is it possible to crush the tablets or switch to a liquid?
- Is it safe to take melatonin for sleep with levetiracetam?

RESOURCES

- Drug dosing for a child may (or may not) be in the drug's PI, which includes only FDA-approved indications. It may be included in the off-label section of a general drug information resource, such as *UpToDate Lexidrug* (previously Lexicomp). A pediatric resource such as *The Harriet Lane Handbook* includes pediatric dosing that might otherwise be unavailable. The clinical guidelines for the condition might have recommended dosing for children, especially for common pediatric conditions, such as epilepsy and various infectious diseases.
- Administration recommendations (e.g., if the tablets can be crushed) and the product formulations available (e.g., a solution) will be reflected in the PI and general drug information resources. If a formulation is not available, it can possibly be prepared by a compounding pharmacist, following the preparation recommendations in USP 795 and the master formula (recipe) (i.e., for oral levetiracetam liquid).
- A drug-natural product interaction tool (found in most general drug information resources), or a specific natural medicine resource, can be used to evaluate the safety of taking melatonin and levetiracetam.

PACKAGE INSERTS

The PI is the FDA-approved drug information that is part of the drug's official labeling. The example PI on the next page shows the common categories included (which are also found in drug monographs from general drug information resources, discussed later in the chapter). The table at the bottom of the page describes methods for locating a PI.

> The FDA approves drugs and their labeling. The PI is part of the labeling. PIs contain only the information approved by the FDA. They do not include, for example, off-label uses or drug costs.

COMMON CONTENT CATEGORIES IN A DRUG PACKAGE INSERT

PRESCRIBING INFORMATION
EVISTA (raloxifene hydrochloride) Tablet for Oral Use

BOXED WARNING

Increased Risk of Venous Thromboembolism and Death from Stroke.

----------Recent Major Changes----------

None.

----------Indications and Usage----------

EVISTA is an estrogen agonist/antagonist indicated for:

- Treatment and prevention of osteoporosis in postmenopausal women.
- Reduction in risk of invasive breast cancer in postmenopausal women.

----------Dosage and Administration----------

60 mg tablet orally once daily.

Calcium and vitamin D should be added if insufficient.

----------Dosage Forms and Strengths----------

Tablets (not scored) 60 mg.

----------Contraindications----------

- Active or past venous thromboembolism.
- Pregnancy.

----------Warnings and Precautions----------

- Venous thromboembolism.
- Death due to stroke in patients with cardiovascular disease.
- Do not use to prevent cardiovascular disease.
- Hypertriglyceridemia.

----------Adverse Reactions----------

Adverse reactions (> 2% and more common than with placebo) include: hot flashes, leg cramps, peripheral edema, arthralgia…

----------Drug Interactions----------

Cholestyramine: use with EVISTA is not recommended. Reduces raloxifene absorption.

Warfarin: monitor prothrombin time.

----------Use in Specific Populations----------

Renal impairment: EVISTA should be used with caution in patients with moderate or severe renal impairment.

----------Drug Abuse and Dependence----------

Not applicable.

----------Overdosage/Toxicology----------

In an 8-week study of 63 postmenopausal women, a dose of raloxifene 600 mg/day was safely tolerated.

In clinical trials, no raloxifene overdose has been reported.

--------Pharmacology/Mechanism of Action--------

Raloxifene is an estrogen agonist/antagonist, commonly referred to as a selective estrogen receptor modulator (SERM). The biological actions of raloxifene are largely mediated through binding to estrogen receptors.

----------Additional Categories----------

Description (active and inactive ingredients)

Pharmacokinetics and Pharmacodynamics

Clinical Studies

How Supplied/Storage and Handling

Patient Counseling Information

Revised; not the actual Evista Package Insert.

PACKAGE INSERT LOCATIONS	FORMATS	WEBSITE
DailyMed (NLM)	Online	dailymed.nlm.nih.gov
Drugs@FDA	Online and Mobile App	accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/cder/daf
The Drug Manufacturer's Website	Online	The manufacturer's website (e.g., pfizer.com) or the drug-specific website (common with newer drugs; the website URL will be the drug's brand name, such as eliquis.com)
Attached to the physical product (e.g., the bottle or box)	Printed	N/A

THE PI INCLUDES THE DRUG'S SAFETY INFORMATION

All drugs, OTC and prescription, have some degree of risk. When a decision is made to prescribe a drug (and the patient agrees to take it), the benefit must outweigh the risk. Important drug safety information in the PI is split into the categories below. Dispensing of the drug may require separate patient handouts alerting to the drug's toxicity (Medication Guides) and/or a strategy to manage the risk (REMS). These are discussed in the Drug Allergies & Adverse Drug Reactions chapter.

When drug safety information changes (e.g., new warnings, withdrawal from the market), the FDA publishes a safety communication or alert on their website, and an updated PI will reflect the changes.

- Boxed Warnings: the strictest warnings. The black box around the warning (see example on previous page) alerts prescribers to the risk of death or permanent disability (e.g., increased risk of venous thromboembolism and death from stroke).
- Contraindications: if a patient has a contraindication to a drug, the drug cannot be used in that patient. The risk will outweigh any possible benefit (e.g., history of venous thromboembolism is a contraindication to the use of raloxifene). If there are no known contraindications for a drug, the section will state "None."
- Warnings and Precautions: includes serious reactions that can result in death, hospitalization, medical intervention, disability or teratogenicity (e.g., raloxifene has a warning for venous thromboembolism). Warnings and precautions may or may not change a prescribing decision.
- Adverse Reactions: refers to undesirable, uncomfortable or dangerous effects from a drug (e.g., arthralgia from raloxifene). The risk-benefit assessment is patient-specific (e.g., arthralgia from raloxifene may be a concern for a patient with chronic joint pain versus a patient with no joint pain).

GENERAL DRUG INFORMATION RESOURCES

General drug information resources rely on the PI for much of their drug monograph content. The table on the following page describes the general drug information resources commonly used by pharmacists. These resources are managed by different companies, and the additional information they contain beyond standard package labeling content varies (see the Unique Features table).

> General drug information resources contain monographs on each drug. The monographs include the FDA-approved information from the drug's PI, plus additional items, depending on the resource.

Most general drug information resources require a paid subscription, but a few (e.g., *Drugs.com, RxList)* can be accessed by anyone at no cost to the user. Many resources are available online (as websites, electronic books or comprehensive, searchable databases). Some can be used as a mobile application to help direct real-time patient care decisions.

Commonly used drug monograph databases collate information from the PI and other sources and include *Clinical Pharmacology, Facts and Comparisons, UpToDate Lexidrug* and *Micromedex*. Each contains information that pharmacists find useful, including *Trissel's* IV drug compatibility and stability data, drug class comparisons, natural products, drug identification (tablet/capsule) and international drug names. Most databases provide drug pricing, with either the drug's average wholesale price (AWP), which is usually reported by the manufacturer, or the average price charged at pharmacies, which tends to be lower (~17% less than the AWP).

The *American Hospital Formulary Service (AHFS) Clinical Drug Information* provides comprehensive monographs that link to supporting evidence and references, which makes it a very useful resource for researching a topic in detail. The off-label drug use section is well-researched, with linked references.

Caution: pharmacists rely on the data in the drug information resource at their practice site, but when drug information is updated, there can be a lag time until the PI and the drug's monograph include the update (especially printed versions). Pharmacists may need to check multiple sources to confirm they are retrieving the most current content.

SUMMARY OF GENERAL DRUG INFORMATION RESOURCES

REFERENCE	FORMATS	DESCRIPTION
American Hospital Formulary Service (AHFS) ahfsdruginformation.com An ASHP product	AHFS Drug Information: Book AHFS DI Essentials: Part of AHFS CDI (below) AHFS Clinical Drug Information (AHFS CDI): Online and Mobile App	Collection of drug monographs for medications available in the U.S. Select drug monographs from AHFS Drug Information reformatted for point-of-care decision making; expands on therapeutic evidence and includes additional information (e.g., counseling). AHFS Drug Information and AHFS DI Essentials databases, plus real-time updates (e.g., drug shortages, FDA safety alerts).
Clinical Pharmacology (powered by ClinicalKey) clinicalkey.com/pharmacology	Online and Mobile App	Drug information (e.g., monographs for Rx and OTC drugs, natural products and investigational drugs) provided by Clinical Pharmacology with real-time updates (e.g., drug safety changes) and point-of-care solutions supported by ClinicalKey.
Epocrates/Epocrates + epocrates.com	Online and Mobile App	Free with registration; drug information plus guideline summaries. Epocrates + (fee required) expands into evidence-based disease management and includes sections on natural products, lab and diagnostic information and ICD-10 coding (for billing purposes).
Facts & Comparisons eAnswers wolterskluwer.com/en/solutions/uptodate/enterprise/lexidrug-facts-and-comparisons	Online	Collection of databases; includes drug monographs, comparative drug charts and other unique resources (e.g., search drugs based on a specific adverse reaction).
UpToDate Lexidrug (previously Lexicomp) wolterskluwer.com/en/solutions/uptodate/enterprise/lexidrug	Drug Information Handbook: Book Online and Mobile App	Drug monographs organized alphabetically; includes useful appendices (e.g., drug class comparisons, equivalent dosing charts). Multiple clinical databases beyond drug information monographs depending on subscription level purchased (see the Unique Features and Locating Specific Types of Information tables).
Micromedex merative.com/clinical-decision-support	Online and Mobile App	Multiple clinical databases beyond drug information monographs (see the Unique Features and Locating Specific Types of Information tables).
Prescriber's Digital Reference (*mobile*PDR) pdr.net/mobilepdr/	Online and Mobile App	Free with registration; includes information for drugs, vaccines and biologics. More detail than PIs, and includes practical information, such as where injections can be given and time to clinical effect.
PubChem (NLM) pubchem.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov	Online	Free from the National Library of Medicine (NLM). Includes information on chemical properties and structures, general drug information (including toxicity and safety), and links to other resources.
Drugs.com drugs.com	Online and Mobile App	Free for professionals and consumers; drug information is primarily sourced from other products, including AHFS Drug Information, Micromedex and Cerner Multum.
RxList rxlist.com	Online	Free for professionals and consumers; drug information is sourced from other products, including the FDA, Cerner Multum and First Databank, Inc.

UNIQUE FEATURES OF COMMON DRUG INFORMATION RESOURCES

The table below describes some of the popular features of general drug information resources that are useful in daily practice and commonly accessed by pharmacists. Many online databases link to external sites that have public access (e.g., *UpToDate Lexidrug* includes vaccine monographs and immunization schedules and provides links to the CDC website).

REFERENCE	Off-Label Uses	IV Drug Compatibility	Drug/Pill Identification	Natural Products	Drug Class Comparisons	Pricing	International Drug Names
AHFS/AHFS CDI	✓	✓					✓ (via USP Dictionary of USAN and International Drug Names)
Clinical Pharmacology	✓	✓ (via Trissel's*)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓ (via Index Nominum)
Drugs.com	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Epocrates/ Epocrates +	✓		✓	✓ (Epocrates +)	✓	✓	
Facts & Comparisons eAnswers	✓	✓ (via Trissel's*)	✓	✓	✓		✓ (via Martindale)
UpToDate Lexidrug	✓	✓ (via Trissel's*)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓ (via Martindale)
Micromedex	✓	✓ (via Trissel's*)	✓	✓	✓	✓ (Red Book)	✓ (via Martindale, Index Nominum and others)
***mobile*PDR**			✓		✓		

**Data from Trissel's 2 Clinical Pharmaceutics Database*

PHARMACIST'S LETTER

Pharmacist's Letter does not contain traditional drug monographs, but is a valuable resource that provides evidence-based drug information. The same company provides similar products called *Prescriber's Letter* and *Pharmacy Technician's Letter.* Subscribers receive a monthly newsletter with short summaries on new or updated drug information, and have online access to helpful practice tools, including:

- New drug approvals, drug withdrawals, new dosage forms and first-time generics
- Charts (e.g., drug class comparisons, disease-state treatment summaries)
- Patient education summaries and patient flyers
- Continuing education (CE)
- Training materials for technicians and intern pharmacists

OTC DRUG INFORMATION

OTC, or nonprescription drugs, are considered safe and effective for self-diagnosed conditions by the general public, have adequate written directions for self-use, and do not require physician supervision. A prescription is not needed to purchase OTC products.

LABELING REQUIREMENTS FOR OTC DRUGS

The labeling on prescription drugs is written for healthcare providers. The labeling on OTC drugs is written for patients who may not have medical training. The language needs to be written in a manner that a layperson can understand, in order to be able to use the drug safely and for its intended purpose. The package labeling information for OTC drugs is in the Drug Facts Panel (see image) and must include:

- The active ingredients, including the amount in each dosage unit and the purpose
- The uses (simpler word than indications) for the product
- Specific warnings, including when the drug should not be used (e.g., kidney disease), and when it is appropriate to consult with a doctor or pharmacist
- Side effects, and substances or activities to avoid
- Dosage instructions
- The inactive ingredients

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OTC DRUG APPROVAL

There are two methods that a manufacturer can use to market an OTC product: the New Drug Application (NDA) process and the OTC Monograph process. The NDA approval process for prescription drugs is managed through the FDA's Center for Drug Evaluation and Research (CDER). OTC drugs can go through the same drug approval process, or the manufacturer can opt to stick to the standards in the OTC monograph for the therapeutic drug class. The monograph for the class will cover the acceptable ingredients, doses, formulations, and labeling, plus study data on the drug's safety and efficacy.

OTC drugs that have gone through the NDA approval process become FDA-approved drugs. The OTC drug labeling can be found on the FDA website through *Drugs@FDA*, and will be listed in common general drug information resources (e.g., *Lexidrug, Micromedex*). The labeling for OTC drugs does not need to be a separate document, but can be the container itself, as long as the items specified above are included.

PRACTICE GUIDELINES

Major medical groups and organizations publish practice guidelines to promote evidence-based treatment of conditions. Commonly used guidelines (and the organizations that publish them) should be known for the NAPLEX (see Study Tip Gal).

LOCATING GUIDELINES FOR COMMON CONDITIONS

ANTICOAGULATION
Guidelines from the American College of Chest Physicians (known as CHEST guidelines):

- Stroke Prevention in Atrial Fibrillation
- Venous Thromboembolism

CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASES
Guidelines from the American College of Cardiology/ American Heart Association (ACC/AHA):

- Acute Coronary Syndromes
- Atrial Fibrillation
- Heart Failure
- High Cholesterol
- Hypertension

DIABETES
American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists (AACE)
American Diabetes Association (ADA)

INFECTIOUS DISEASES
Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA)
HIV/AIDS: US Dept. of Health and Human Services (clinicalinfo.hiv.gov)
Sexually Transmitted Infections: Centers for Disease Control (CDC)

ONCOLOGY
American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO)
National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN)

PEDIATRICS
The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)

PREGNANCY/WOMEN'S HEALTH
The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG)

PSYCHIATRIC CONDITIONS
American Psychiatric Association (APA) Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental disorders, 5th Ed. (DSM-5)

PULMONARY CONDITIONS
Asthma: Global Initiative for Asthma (GINA)
COPD: Global Initiative for Chronic Obstructive Lung Disease (GOLD)

RENAL DISEASE
Kidney Disease Improving Global Outcomes (KDIGO)

VACCINES
Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP)
Centers for Disease Control (CDC)

LOCATING SPECIFIC TYPES OF INFORMATION

In addition to societal guidelines for common conditions, it is important to be aware of select specialty references that may be encountered on the NAPLEX (see table below). General drug information resources described previously (e.g., *Lexidrug, Micromedex)* provide some of the same information.

SPECIALTY REFERENCES BY TOPIC

ADVERSE REACTIONS
FDAble: FDA searchable database of adverse reactions caused by medicines, vaccines, devices, tobacco products, dietary supplements

- MedWatch: FDA's Adverse Event Reporting System (FAERS)
- Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS)
- Manufacturer and User Facility Device Experience (MAUDE)
- Safety Reporting Portal

COMPOUNDING AND PHARMACEUTICS
Allen's The Art, Science, and Technology of Pharmaceutical Compounding

Safety Data Sheets (SDS), previously called Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS)

Merck Index *Online* (a database of monographs for chemicals, drugs and biologicals)

Remington: The Science and Practice of Pharmacy

USP Compounding Compendium:

- USP 795: Non-Sterile Preparations
- USP 797: Sterile Preparations
- USP 800: Hazardous Drugs - Handling in Healthcare Settings
- USP-NF: monographs for drug substances, dosage forms, compounded preparations and excipients

ASHP's Extemporaneous Formulations for Pediatric, Geriatric, and Special Needs Patients

Handbook of Pharmaceutical Excipients

International Journal of Pharmaceutical Compounding

DRUG INTERACTIONS
Most general drug information resources

DRUG PRICING
RED BOOK (Micromedex)

Medi-Span Price Rx

DRUG SHORTAGES
ASHP Current Drug Shortages

FDA Drug Shortages

CDC Current Vaccine Shortages & Delays

American Hospital Formulary Service Clinical Drug Information (AHFS CDI)

GERIATRICS
American Geriatrics Society (AGS) Beers Criteria for Potentially Inappropriate Medication Use in Older Adults

Geriatric Lexi-Drugs (Lexidrug)

IMMUNIZATIONS (ADULT AND PEDIATRIC)
CDC Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP)

- Updates published in the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR)

CDC Pink Book: Epidemiology and Prevention of Vaccine-Preventable Diseases

Immunize.org

Vaccines, Blood & Biologics (FDA)

INFECTIOUS DISEASES
Sanford Guide to Antimicrobial Therapy

Sanford Guide to HIV/AIDS Therapy

Johns Hopkins ABX and HIV Guides

Travel Medicine
World Health Organization (WHO)

CDC

- Yellow Book: Health Information for International Travel
- Travelers' Health: resources for travelers and healthcare professionals

International Society of Travel Medicine (ISTM)

INTERNATIONAL DRUG INFORMATION
Index Nominum: International Drug Directory

Martindale: The Complete Drug Reference

USP Dictionary of United States Adopted Names (USAN) and International Drug Names

European Drug Index

INVESTIGATIONAL DRUGS
Clinicaltrials.gov (NIH)

IV DRUG COMPATIBILITY AND STABILITY
ASHP's Handbook on Injectable Drugs

King Guide to Parenteral Admixtures

Trissel's 2 Clinical Pharmaceutics Database

SPECIALTY REFERENCES BY TOPIC (Continued)

DISEASE PREVENTION
US Dept. of Health and Human Services Healthy People 2030 (including Social Determinants of Health)

DRUG SUBSTITUTION
FDA's Orange Book: Approved Drug Products with Therapeutic Equivalence Evaluations

FDA's Purple Book: Lists of Licensed Biological Products with Reference Product Exclusivity and Biosimilarity or Interchangeability Evaluations

MEDICATION SAFETY
FDA MedWatch (report adverse event, medication error)

Institute for Safe Medication Practices (ISMP)

- Report medication errors to the ISMP Medication Errors Reporting Program (ISMP MERP)

NIOSH List of Antineoplastic (Chemotherapy) and Other Hazardous Drugs in Healthcare Settings

Crediblemeds.org (QT Drugs Lists)

FDA:

- Drug and Biologic Recalls
- Drug Communications and Safety Alerts
- Drug Safety Label Changes database
- Medication Guides

NATURAL PRODUCTS/ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE
NatMed (formerly Natural Medicines, a database provided by Therapeutic Research Center)

Dietary Supplements Label Database (NIH)

USP Dietary Supplements Compendium

PEDIATRICS
NeoFax and Pediatrics (Micromedex)

Pediatric & Neonatal Lexi-Drugs (Lexidrug)

Red Book: Report of the Committee on Infectious Diseases (AAP)

The Harriet Lane Handbook

Pediatric Pharmacy Association (PPA) Key Potentially Inappropriate Drugs in Pediatrics: The KIDs List

ASHP's Pediatric Injectable Drugs (The Teddy Bear Book)

Nelson Textbook of Pediatrics

PHARMACOLOGY
Goodman and Gilman's The Pharmacological Basis of Therapeutics

Katzung's Basic and Clinical Pharmacology

PREGNANCY AND LACTATION
Briggs' Drugs in Pregnancy and Lactation

CDC: Medications during Pregnancy/Breastfeeding

Hale's Medications and Mothers' Milk

LactMed (NLM)

MotherToBaby

POISONING AND TOXICOLOGY
Lexi-Tox (Lexidrug)

Micromedex Tox & Drug Product Lookup (previously POISINDEX)

Goldfrank's Toxicologic Emergencies

State Poison Control Center

The American Association of Poison Control Centers

REGULATORY AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
FDA Center for Drug Evaluation and Research (CDER)

Pink Sheet

THERAPEUTICS AND DISEASE MANAGEMENT
DiPiro's Pharmacotherapy: A Pathophysiologic Approach

Handbook of Nonprescription Drugs: An Interactive Approach to Self-Care (OTC)

Koda-Kimble's Applied Therapeutics: The Clinical Use of Drugs

The Merck Manual

UpToDate

CDC: Diseases & Conditions

Harrison's Principles of Internal Medicine

Medscape

VETERINARY
Plumb's Veterinary Drugs

SELECTING THE CORRECT "COLOR" DRUG REFERENCE

A number of important references are referred to by a color (see Study Tip Gal below). One of the more frequently accessed resources is the FDA's *Orange Book*, available online at accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/cder/ob/. This resource is used to determine if a generic substitution of a branded product is acceptable based on an AB rating, which indicates therapeutic equivalence to the brand.

Below is an example of the methylphenidate extended-release tablet entry from the online *Orange Book* indicating therapeutic equivalence to *Concerta*.

Mkt. Status	Active Ingredient	Proprietary Name	Appl No	Dosage Form	Route	Strength	TE Code	RLD	RS	Applicant Holder
RX	METHYLPHENIDATE HYDROCHLORIDE	CONCERTA	N021121	TABLET, EXTENDED RELEASE	ORAL	18MG	AB	RLD		JANSSEN PHARMACEUTICALS INC
RX	METHYLPHENIDATE HYDROCHLORIDE	CONCERTA	N021121	TABLET, EXTENDED RELEASE	ORAL	27MG	AB	RLD		JANSSEN PHARMACEUTICALS INC
RX	METHYLPHENIDATE HYDROCHLORIDE	CONCERTA	N021121	TABLET, EXTENDED RELEASE	ORAL	36MG	AB	RLD		JANSSEN PHARMACEUTICALS INC
RX	METHYLPHENIDATE HYDROCHLORIDE	CONCERTA	N021121	TABLET, EXTENDED RELEASE	ORAL	54MG	AB	RLD	RS	JANSSEN PHARMACEUTICALS INC

"COLOR" DRUG REFERENCES

Orange Book (FDA)
List of approved drugs that can be interchanged with generics based on therapeutic equivalence.

Pink Book (CDC)
Information on epidemiology and vaccine-preventable diseases.

Pink Sheet (Pharma Intelligence)
News reports on regulatory, legislative, legal and business developments.

Purple Book (FDA)
List of biological drug products, including biosimilars.

Red Book, Pharmacy
Drug pricing information.

Red Book, Pediatrics (AAP)
Summaries of pediatric infectious diseases, antimicrobial treatment and vaccinations.

Yellow Book (CDC)
Information on the health risks of international travel, required vaccines and prophylaxis medications.

Green Book (FDA)
Information on approved animal drug products.

LOCATING CLINICAL STUDY DATA AND RESEARCH SUMMARIES

Resources can be differentiated into primary, secondary and tertiary sources. A primary source (e.g., a research publication in a peer-reviewed journal) is the original data or results that provide direct evidence concerning a topic or question under investigation. A secondary source (e.g., a review article) is used to summarize and offer additional analysis of primary sources. Lastly, a tertiary source (e.g., an encyclopedia) provides a general overview of a topic and is compiled from various references (both primary and secondary).

Pharmacists use several databases to search for published studies, systematic reviews, meta-analyses and review articles (see the Biostatistics chapter for descriptions of the different types of medical studies). Searches can be done using Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) terms, which are used to group articles with the same content. Two of the more common databases are:

- *PubMed:* accesses MEDLINE (journal articles in medicine, nursing, dentistry, veterinary medicine, life sciences and more) and is a free service available from the NLM (ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/).
- *Cochrane Library:* provides evidence-based information to guide clinical decision making. The database of Cochrane Systematic Reviews contains > 7,500 reviews [e.g., *Diagnostic Tests for Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in Preschool Children]*. This important work is supported by government funds and donations, with no cost for users. It can be accessed at cochranelibrary.com.

CONSUMER RESOURCES

Pharmacists should be able to recommend reputable websites for patient-friendly information on medical conditions and drug treatment.

- The CDC (cdc.gov) has a symptom checker and provides information on infectious diseases, immunizations and travelers' health.
- *Drugs.com* (drugs.com) and *RxList* (rxlist.com) provide drug monographs and other information (see earlier descriptions in the General Drug Information Resources section).
- *Mayo Clinic* (mayoclinic.org) provides comprehensive patient information for diseases, symptoms, tests and procedures, and drugs and supplements.
- *MedlinePlus* (medlineplus.gov, from the NLM) has sections on health topics, drugs and supplements, health-related videos, lab tests and a medical encyclopedia with images.
- *WebMD* (webmd.com) covers diseases, healthy living, pregnancy, prescription and OTC drug information, plus it has a pill identifier and interaction checker.
- FDA For Consumers website (fda.gov/consumers) provides comprehensive information on drugs (including recalls), food products, medical devices, vaccines, tobacco products and other topics that fall under the FDA's jurisdiction. Content can be selected by audience type (e.g., women, children or minority health).
- *MyHealthfinder* (health.gov/myhealthfinder, from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) has a mission to encourage healthy living through various topics (e.g., how to eat in a healthy manner, types of physical activity).
- *SafeMedication* (safemedication.com, from ASHP) includes medication tips and tools and a searchable database of patient-focused drug monographs, pulled from AHFS.

CHAPTER 6

DRUG FORMULATIONS & PATIENT COUNSELING

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= Study Tip Gal

DRUG FORMULATION CONSIDERATIONS

Compressed tablets are the most common formulation type and the least expensive to manufacture. Capsules are also relatively inexpensive to make. If a pharmaceutical company develops a drug in another formulation, the cost will be higher, and there must be a patient group that would benefit from the new formulation. For example, methylphenidate 10 mg immediate-release tablets cost ~$1.00 per tablet. The branded patch is ~$18 per patch. The higher-priced formulation is beneficial in a child who can't swallow tablets or doesn't want to take doses during the day while at school.

On the exam when unsure if a particular formulation exists it is helpful to ask two questions:

1. Who uses this drug (e.g., which condition/patient population)?
2. Is there a reason to have this type of formulation for this patient population?

EXAMPLE: OLANZAPINE

Olanzapine is an antipsychotic that has various formulation options: immediate-release (IR) tablet, orally disintegrating tablet (ODT), short-acting injection and long-acting injection.

WHO USES THIS DRUG?

People with schizophrenia, bipolar disorder or some type of psychosis.

WHY ARE DIFFERENT FORMULATIONS BENEFICIAL?

Patients with schizophrenia often discontinue their antipsychotics. A long-acting injection can improve adherence. ODTs dissolve quickly in the mouth; they are useful to prevent the patient from hiding the medication in the mouth ("cheeking") and then spitting it out when no one is watching. The short-acting injection works quickly and is useful for acute agitation.

EXAMPLE: ONDANSETRON

Ondansetron is a 5-HT3 receptor antagonist (5-HT3 RA) used to prevent or treat nausea. It is available in various formulations: IR tablet, oral solution, ODT, oral film and short-acting injection.

WHO USES THIS DRUG?

Patients receiving emetogenic drugs (e.g., chemotherapy), post-surgical patients or patients with any condition that causes nausea/vomiting.

WHY ARE DIFFERENT FORMULATIONS BENEFICIAL?

Oral medications will not be very effective when a patient is vomiting; an injection would be useful in this case if the patient is in a medical setting. An ODT or oral film can be useful for nausea without vomiting. Dysphagia (difficulty swallowing) is common in patients receiving chemotherapy and other conditions (e.g., post-stroke, elderly, painful esophageal ulcers, strictures or tumors). An oral solution would be preferred in many of these cases. Though tablets can sometimes be crushed and given by nasogastric (NG) tube, oral solutions are typically preferred when giving medications via NG tube.

Another 5-HT3 RA, granisetron, comes in a long-acting patch that prevents chemotherapy-induced nausea. The patch is applied before chemotherapy to allow time for the drug to be absorbed through the skin.

ORAL FORMULATIONS

The majority of solid tablets and capsules are designed to be swallowed whole. These can be short-acting or long-acting formulations. Other oral medications include liquids (e.g., solutions, suspensions), ODTs, chewable tablets, sublingual tablets/films and granules/powders. See the table below for a summary of oral formulations and their common uses.

FORMULATION	EXAMPLES	REASONS FOR USE
Long-acting oral tablets/capsules	*Concerta* – methylphenidate *Detrol LA* – tolterodine The following suffixes indicate a long-acting formulation: XL, XR, ER, LA, SR, CR, CRT, SA, TR, "cont" (for controlled release); other products may have 24, timecaps or sprinkles in the name. **Osmotic Controlled-Release Oral Delivery System (OROS)** *Concerta, Cardura XL, Procardia XL, Delzicol* and other long-acting medications use an OROS delivery system. Water from the gut is absorbed into the delivery system by osmosis, which increases the pressure inside and forces the drug out through a small opening. The tablet/capsule shell may be visible in the patient's stool (called a ghost tablet/capsule), but the drug has been released (important counseling point). There are several types of OROS formulations. For example, *Concerta* has an outer layer that allows for fast drug delivery, followed by an extended-release.	Drugs may be designed to release slowly to avoid nausea or to provide a long duration of action. Providing a smooth level of drug release over time reduces high "peaks," which reduces side effects (e.g., less drug hitting the "wrong" receptor) and provides a safe level of drug over the dosing interval. Patients must be counseled to not crush or chew any drug that is a long-acting formulation (including ER opioids). It could release all the medication at once, and a fatal dose could be released. Some long-acting capsules (e.g., *Xtampza ER)* can be opened and the contents sprinkled on certain foods. The capsule contents should not be crushed or chewed. Always consult package labeling, as not all formulations have been studied in this way. ISMP's "Do Not Crush List" is a useful resource for drugs that should not be crushed. There are a few long-acting formulations that should not be crushed but can be cut on the score line (e.g., *Toprol XL*, carbidopa/levodopa ER).
Liquid oral suspensions	*Augmentin* – amoxicillin/clavulanate *Tylenol Children's* – acetaminophen, for children	Useful in patients with swallowing difficulty or who are unable to follow directions (e.g., infants and young children, adults with altered mental status, animals). Liquid medications can be administered in the side of the mouth using a dropper, and most can be administered via a feeding tube. Suspensions must be shaken to redisperse the medication prior to administration. Shaking is not required for solutions, as the drug is evenly distributed in the solvent.
Liquid oral solutions	*Constulose* – lactulose, for hepatic encephalopathy *Neurontin* – gabapentin, for neuropathic pain *Rapamune* – sirolimus, for prevention of rejection after organ transplant	
Chewable tablets	*Singulair* – montelukast *Lamictal* – lamotrigine	Primarily used for children who are unable to swallow tablets. A few chewable products are used by adults. Chewable calcium products are popular because calcium tablets are large and hard for many people to swallow. Lanthanum carbonate *(Fosrenol)* is a phosphate binder that must be chewed for the drug to bind phosphate in the gut.

FORMULATION	EXAMPLES	REASONS FOR USE
Lozenges/troches	Clotrimazole, for oral thrush *Cepacol* – benzocaine/menthol, for sore throat	Used to treat a condition in the oral mucosa; the drug is held in the mouth while the troche slowly dissolves.
Orally disintegrating tablets (ODTs) Placed on the tongue and disintegrates rapidly in saliva (i.e., drinking liquid is not needed) Films that dissolve in the mouth are similar to ODTs	*Lamictal ODT* – lamotrigine, for seizures *Nurtec* - rimegepant, for migraines *Remeron SolTab* – mirtazapine, for depression *Zyprexa Zydis* – olanzapine, for schizophrenia Ondansetron – for nausea, dysphagia	An ODT may be helpful when a patient cannot swallow tablets/capsules due to dysphagia (difficulty swallowing). Paralysis of the throat muscles from stroke is the most common cause. Other causes of dysphagia include: esophagitis, esophageal tumors, ↓ LES pressure/reflux, facial swelling from an allergic reaction and conditions that worsen motor function (e.g., Parkinson disease. Children are often unable to swallow tablets or capsules. Non-adherence: ODTs dissolve quickly, which can help prevent "cheeking" (i.e., hiding the drug in the mouth for later disposal). Nausea can make it difficult to tolerate anything orally. If vomiting is present or expected, a non-oral route should be used (e.g., a suppository).
Sublingual (SL) or buccal delivery with a tablet, film, powder or spray	*Edluar* – zolpidem SL tablet Nitroglycerin SL tablet	SL and buccal formulations have the same benefits as ODTs. With SL/buccal absorption, the onset of action is faster than with a tablet or capsule that is swallowed; the drug is readily absorbed into the venous circulation at the administration site (e.g., under the tongue). Less drug is lost to gut degradation and first-pass metabolism.

FORMULATION	EXAMPLES	REASONS FOR USE
Granules, powders or capsules that can be opened and sprinkled into soft food or water**	**Sprinkled on Applesauce** *Adderall XR* – dextroamphetamine/ amphetamine ER *Coreg CR* – carvedilol *Dexilant* – dexlansoprazole *Focalin XR* – dexmethylphenidate Memantine XR *Nexium* – esomeprazole *Ritalin LA* – methylphenidate **Other Specific Instructions** *Cambia* – diclofenac powder, in water *Creon* and other pancreatic enzyme products – pancrelipase, on soft food with a low pH (applesauce, pureed pears or banana) *Depakote Sprinkles* – valproic acid, soft food Potassium chloride ER capsules – on applesauce or pudding Cholestyramine, in 2-6 oz water or non-carbonated liquid *Singulair* – montelukast granules, in 5 mL of baby formula or breast milk or in a spoonful of applesauce, carrots, rice or ice cream *Vyvanse* – lisdexamfetamine, in water, yogurt or orange juice	These formulations are primarily for pediatric or geriatric patients who have difficulty swallowing. An oral medication may be given via NG tube rather than converting to IV administration. Some medications are not available in an IV formulation. Instruct the patient on the following: ■ Do not chew any long-acting pellets or beads that are emptied out from a capsule. ■ If capsule contents are mixed in food or liquid, do not let the mixture sit too long (take within the time directed). Use a small amount of food or liquid; the entire mixture should be ingested to ensure the full dose is taken. ■ Do not add to anything warm or hot (the contents will dissolve too quickly). **Always refer to the product labeling for instructions; not all capsule medications should be opened and administered (refer to long-acting capsules section earlier in this table). Medications should only be mixed in the specific foods/liquids that were studied, because the pH of the food/liquid could be critical. Many medications have specific instructions for oral vs. NG tube administration.

RISKS OF SWEETENERS

Formulations that are exposed to taste buds (e.g., ODTs) often contain sweeteners (e.g., aspartame, saccharin), which are generally well-tolerated but can be problematic for some people. Sorbitol metabolism produces gas, cramping and bloating in sensitive patients, including those with irritable bowel syndrome. Phenylalanine is found in the sweetener aspartame, which is used in many ODT, chewable and granule medication formulations. It is a dangerous sweetener for those with phenylketonuria (PKU), a genetic defect in which the enzyme that degrades phenylalanine is absent. Lactose is the most commonly used excipient in drug formulations. It may be an issue in patients with lactose intolerance. Additional sweeteners and excipients are reviewed in the Nonsterile Compounding chapter.

ODT AND ORAL FILM COUNSELING

- Orally disintegrating tablets: do not attempt to push the tablets through foil backing as they are friable (i.e., easily broken/crumbled). With dry hands, peel back the foil of one blister and remove the tablet.
- Place tablet (or film) on the tongue; it will dissolve in seconds. Once dissolved, you may swallow with saliva. Administration with liquid is not necessary. Wash hands after administration.

SELECT MEDICATIONS IN UNIQUE FORMULATIONS

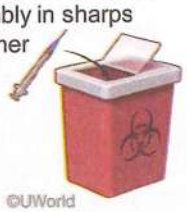
Medications are increasingly offered in new, unique formulations (e.g., *Onzetra Xsail*, a nasal powder for migraine, *Cotempla XR-ODT*, a long-acting ODT for ADHD). These formulations are reviewed in the disease state chapters of this book. The following sections summarize commonly encountered unique formulations, including example products and general counseling information. More specific counseling points for drugs that are available in these formulations can be found in the individual disease state chapters.

INJECTIONS

Injections can be given by various routes, including intradermal, subcutaneous, intramuscular (for short- or long-acting effects) and intravenous (see examples in the table below). Injections that patients give themselves are almost always given by SC injection. IM injections use a longer needle and generally hurt more (due to muscle soreness). *EpiPen* is an IM injection that is given in the thigh for acute need (e.g., bronchoconstriction, wheezing); see the Drug Allergies & Adverse Drug Reactions chapter for details.

FORMULATION	EXAMPLES	REASONS FOR USE
Subcutaneous (SC) injections that patients can mostly self-administer	*Enbrel* - etanercept, for rheumatoid arthritis and other autoimmune conditions *Forteo* - teriparatide, for osteoporosis *Imitrex* – sumatriptan, for acute migraine (abortive treatment) Insulins, GLP-1 agonists – see Diabetes chapter *Lovenox* - enoxaparin, for anticoagulation Naloxone – for opioid overdose reversal *Otrexup* - methotrexate, for rheumatoid arthritis	SC administration is used for rapid effect (e.g., for pain, opioid overdose), for drugs that would degrade or not be absorbed if given by oral administration (e.g., enoxaparin, etanercept) or when oral administration is not tolerated (e.g., due to vomiting).
Long-acting intramuscular (IM) injections	*Abilify Maintena* – aripiprazole *Haldol Decanoate*– haloperidol decanoate *Invega Sustenna, Invega Trinza* – paliperidone *Lupron Depot* – leuprolide *Risperdal Consta* – risperidone *Zyprexa Relprevv* – olanzapine	Various drugs come as long-acting injections to improve adherence (such as antipsychotics) or to ↓ the need for more frequent (painful) injections.
Intravenous (IV) injections	Many acute care drugs	Bypasses the oral route for patients who are intubated or sedated; fast response (can quickly achieve desired concentrations); avoids loss of drug due to N/V.

INJECTABLE MEDICATION COUNSELING

STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3	STEP 4	STEP 5
Wash hands	Prepare injection	Select and clean injection site	Inject	Discard syringes, pen needles or entire assembly in sharps container 

- Inject at least 1 inch away from the previous injection site.
- Never use the same needle more than once.
- Some injections "click" when the needle enters the skin and/or "click" when the injection is complete.
- With single-use devices, discard the needle or entire assembly (with attached needle) in a sharps container.
- Do not rub the skin near anticoagulant injections (e.g., enoxaparin, fondaparinux); can cause severe bruising.
- Do not use any device to heat up cold injections; let the injection sit at room temperature for ~20 minutes.
- Liquids can degrade; if a solution is discolored or contains particles, do not use. Do not use beyond the expiration date.

BIOLOGICS AND BIOSIMILARS

Biologic medications (biologics) are manufactured from living cells and include vaccines, blood and blood components, gene therapies, insulin and recombinant proteins. Information about FDA-approved biologics is found in the Purple Book.

Biologics include the reference product, biosimilars and interchangeable biosimilars. The reference product is the original FDA-approved product while a biosimilar is structurally similar to the original/reference biologic with no clinically meaningful difference in safety and efficacy. They are essentially a "generic" for a biologic, though true generics are not possible due to the complexity of these compounds. If a biosimilar is FDA-approved as an interchangeable biosimilar product (not all biosimilars), it can be substituted for an original biologic upon dispensing without precriber approval, if state laws allow. A 4-letter code at the end of the biologic or biosimilar name (e.g., adalimumab-bwwd, pegfilgrastim-pbbk) identifies the product and should be included in pharmacy recordkeeping and when reporting an adverse event to MedWatch.

Biologics have similar counseling points for storage and handling. Most biologics are proteins which can easily denature (break apart) if handled incorrectly. Patients should be instructed not to shake the medication, and to avoid exposing the drug to extreme temperatures (hot or cold). Many of these drugs should be stored in the refrigerator prior to use; if refrigeration is needed, they should be slowly brought to room temperature prior to injecting (injecting cold drug is painful).

Monoclonal antibodies ("-mAbs") are a type of biologic; they are injectable proteins used to treat many diseases (e.g., cancer, autoimmune conditions). Most monoclonal antibodies can cause injection reactions and require premedication (e.g., acetaminophen, diphenhydramine) to prevent severe symptoms. Select drugs require administration in a healthcare setting under medical supervision to monitor for reactions (e.g., omalizumab).

PATCHES

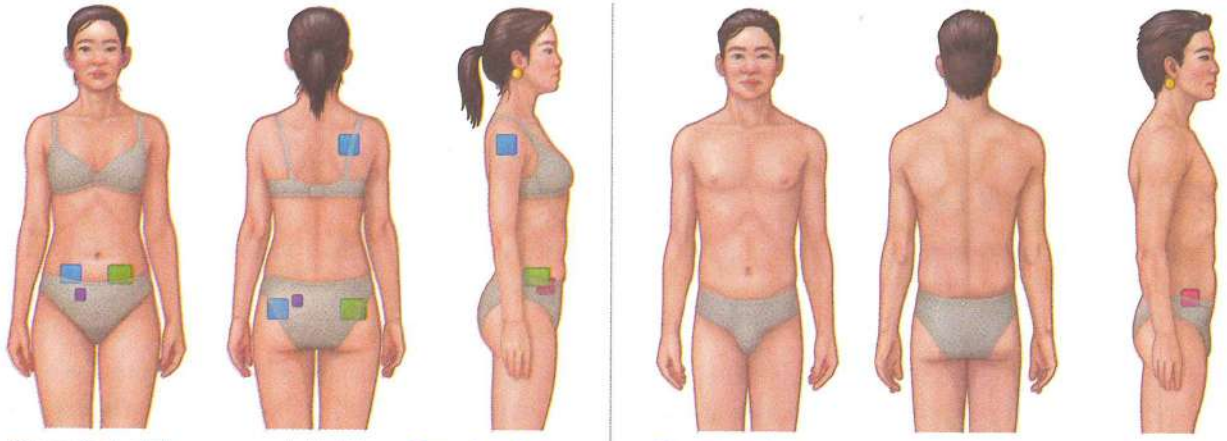
PATCH ADMINISTRATION SITES

Most patches (e.g., *Catapres-TTS,* fentanyl) can be applied to one or more of these common application sites:

- Chest (upper)
- Back (upper and lower)
- Upper arm (on the part facing out)
- Flanks (sides of the body, abdomen level)

Exelon is applied to the same sites, but not the flanks. *Butrans* is applied to the same sites, except rather than the sides of the body near the abdomen, it is applied to the sides of the body, level to the chest. Some pain patches (e.g., *Flector, Lidoderm, Salonpas, Qutenza)* treat local pain, and are applied over the painful area.

The patches in the figures below have unique application sites. *Daytrana* is applied on the hip, alternating right and left hips daily. *Transderm Scop* is applied behind the ear, at least four hours before needed, alternating ears every 72 hours. Never apply patches with estrogen on the breasts, or testosterone on the scrotum (testicles and surrounding area). Patches can irritate the skin; sites where the patch is placed, with the exception of the topical pain patches, should be alternated.



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PATCH FREQUENCY

Twice Daily
Diclofenac *(Flector)*

Daily
Diclofenac *(Licart)*

Methylphenidate *(Daytrana)*: QAM, 2 hours prior to school

Nicotine *(NicoDerm CQ)*

Rivastigmine *(Exelon)*

Rotigotine *(Neupro)*

Selegiline *(Emsam)*

Testosterone *(Androderm*)*: nightly, not on scrotum

Daily (With Special Instructions)
Lidocaine *(Lidoderm)*: 1-3 patches (as needed), on for up to 12 hours, off for 12 hours

Nitroglycerin: on for 12-14 hours, then off for 10-12 hours

Every 72 Hours
Fentanyl: Q72H, if it wears off after 48 hours, change to Q48H

Scopolamine *(Transderm Scop)*: Q72H, PRN

Twice Weekly
Estradiol** *(Vivelle-Dot)*

Oxybutynin *(Oxytrol)*

Weekly
Donepezil *(Adlarity)*

Buprenorphine *(Butrans)*

Clonidine *(Catapres-TTS)*

Estradiol** *(Climara)*

Ethinyl estradiol/norelgestromin *(Xulane, Zafemy)* and ethinyl estradiol/levonorgestrel *(Twirla)*: weekly for 3 weeks, off for 1 week

**Brand discontinued but name still used in practice.*
***Estradiol patches may be used on continuous or cyclic (3 weeks on, 1 week off) schedules at the frequency listed above.*

PATCH COUNSELING

QUESTION	RESPONSE
Can I cut the patch into pieces?	Usually no, except *Lidoderm* and *Qutenza*, which are designed to be cut and applied over the painful regions.
Can the patch be exposed to heat from an electric blanket, heating pad or body temperature > 38°C (> 100.4°F)?	Avoid heat exposure with most patches. Heat causes rapid absorption of the medication from the patch, resulting in toxicity. With fentanyl and buprenorphine, this can be quickly toxic (fatal).
The patch is bothering my skin. What can I do?	Never apply to skin that is irritated. Alternate the application site. The skin should not be shaved shortly before applying; shaving is irritating to the skin. If needed, cut the hair short with scissors. A topical steroid, such as hydrocortisone, can be applied after the patch is removed.
Which patches need to be removed prior to an MRI?	Patches containing metal (e.g., aluminum) need to be removed prior to an MRI or the metal will burn the skin: Clonidine *(Catapres-TTS)* Rotigotine *(Neupro)* Scopolamine *(Transderm Scop)* Testosterone *(Androderm)* Patches containing the same medication (e.g., generics) may vary in metal content between different manufacturers. It is widely recommended that estradiol patches be removed prior to an MRI. Other patches with variable recommendations include nitroglycerin, oxybutynin, diclofenac, nicotine and fentanyl. Always verify the labeling for a specific product.
Can the patch be covered with tape if it will not stick or falls off?	Most patches cannot be covered with tape. A few can be taped around the edges. Fentanyl and buprenorphine *(Butrans)* can be covered only with the permitted adhesive film dressings, *Bioclusive* or *Tegaderm*. *Catapres-TTS* comes with its own adhesive cover, which goes over the patch to hold it in place. Never apply patches to skin that is oily. When applied, patches have to be smoothed out on the skin, and then pressed down for a number of seconds, usually 10-30 seconds.
Where is the patch applied?	Common application sites include the upper chest or upper/sides of the back (below the neck), upper thigh or upper outer arm; select patches have unique application sites (see previous page). Always verify with product labeling.
How do I dispose of used patches?	In most cases, remove and fold the patch to press adhesive surfaces together for disposal. Used drugs should be disposed of according to the manufacturer's instructions, such as throwing it away in a lidded container. Some highly potent narcotic patches (e.g., fentanyl, *Butrans)* and *Daytrana* can be fatal if ingested after removal, especially for a child or pet. For these drugs, the FDA and/or manufacturer may recommend flushing the used patch down the toilet to remove it from the home immediately.
Where is the drug located?	■ The drug can be in a raised pouch, a reservoir (containing a gel or a semi-solid form) or directly incorporated into the adhesive of the patch (the side that adheres to the patient's skin).

TOPICALS

Medications applied to the skin can be used for both local effects or systemic effects throughout the body.

Topical medications used for their local effects have decreased systemic side effects and generally provide faster relief. This includes creams, ointments, gels and solutions. Common conditions treated topically include muscle/joint pain or inflammation, cold sores, acne, eczema or other skin rashes, mild skin infections and hair loss.

Examples of topical medications used for a localized effect include:

- *Voltaren* – diclofenac gel, treats pain near the skin surface
- Mupirocin ointment, treats some skin infections

Topical medications used for systemic effects (i.e., transdermal administration) can be used as an alternative to injections. Patches are a unique type of topical medication (discussed earlier) that are usually used for systemic effects. Another example includes testosterone gel, which is used for hypogonadism/ testosterone deficiency.

NASAL SPRAYS

The nasal route has a faster onset than the oral route and is useful for acute conditions that should be treated quickly, including pain. Nasal sprays bypass gut absorption and first-pass metabolism; some proteins that would get destroyed in the gut (e.g., calcitonin) can be given nasally. Patients with certain conditions may absorb a drug better nasally vs. orally (e.g., patients lacking intrinsic factor needed for oral absorption of vitamin B12). Examples of nasal sprays include:

- *Imitrex* – sumatriptan, fast onset, alternative to injection
- *Afrin* – oxymetazoline
- *Flonase Allergy Relief* – fluticasone

Afrin and *Flonase* are used primarily to treat localized nasal symptoms.

NASAL SPRAY COUNSELING

Before use

- Shake the bottle gently and remove the cap.
- Prime the pump before first use or when you have not used it recently (7 – 14 days on average).
- Blow your nose to clear your nostrils.

Using the spray

- Close one nostril (using your finger, see below) and insert the nasal applicator into the other nostril.
- Start to breathe in through your nose, and press firmly and quickly down once on the applicator to release the spray.

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- Breathe out through your mouth.
- If a second spray is needed (in the same nostril or in the other nostril), repeat the above steps.
- Wipe the nasal applicator with a clean tissue and replace the cap.
- Use the bottle for the labeled number of sprays then discard, even if it is not completely empty.
- Do not blow your nose right after using the nasal spray.

EYE AND EAR DROPS

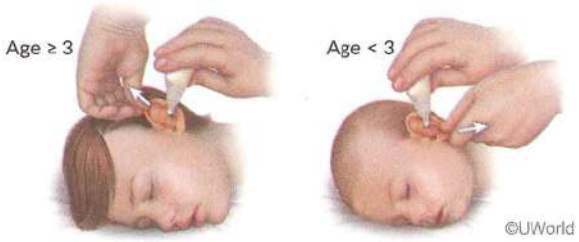
Eye drops and ear drops are used for local effects. Eye drops must be sterile (to prevent infection) and close to the pH of the body (to avoid pain upon administration). The ear is less sensitive, so ear drops have less stringent requirements. Because of this, eye drops can be administered in the ear, but ear drops can never be administered in the eye.

EYE DROP COUNSELING

- Wash your hands before and after using eye drops.
- Before you open the bottle, shake it a few times. Gels should be inverted and shaken once prior to use (to help the medication reach the tip).
- Bend your neck back so that you are looking up. Use one finger to pull down your lower eyelid. It is helpful, at least initially, to use a mirror.
- Without letting the tip of the bottle touch your eye or eyelid, release one drop of the medication by either squeezing the bottle or tapping on the bottom of the bottle. The drop should go into the space between your eye and your lower eyelid. If you squeeze in more than one drop, you are wasting medication.
- After you squeeze the drop of medication into your eye, close your eye. Press a finger between your eye and the top of your nose for at least one minute so more of the medication stays in your eye and you are less likely to have side effects. Blot extra solution from the eyelid with a tissue.
- If you need to use more than one eye drop:
  - If there are two drops of the same medication being given at the same time, wait five minutes between drops (do not administer two drops at once).
  - Wait at least 5 – 10 minutes to put a second medication in the same eye. If administering a gel, wait 10 minutes.
- If the eye drop contains a preservative called benzalkonium chloride (BAK) and you wear soft contact lenses, remove lenses prior to administration and wait 15 minutes to reinsert them.

EAR DROP COUNSELING

- If cold, gently shake the bottle or roll it in your hands for 1 – 2 minutes to warm the solution. Do not drop cold medication into the ear, as discomfort and dizziness can occur.
- Lie down or tilt the head so that the affected ear faces up.
- Gently pull the earlobe up and back for adults to straighten the ear canal. Pull down and back for children < 3 years (see image below).
- Administer the prescribed number of drops into the ear canal. Keep the ear facing up for about five minutes to allow the medication to coat the ear canal.
- Do not touch the dropper tip to any surface. To clean, wipe with a clean tissue.



RECTAL MEDICATIONS

Medications given rectally, such as suppositories and enemas, are used either for localized treatment (e.g., constipation, hemorrhoids) or for systemic treatment (e.g., diazepam rectal gel for acute seizures). Suppositories can also be used when the patient is NPO (i.e., nothing by mouth) and systemic treatment is needed (e.g., acetaminophen for pain or fever in an infant). Examples of common rectal medications include:

- *Rowasa* – mesalamine enema, treats local disease (distal ulcerative colitis)
- *Pedia-Lax* – glycerin suppository, treats constipation (stool is in rectum)
- *FeverAll* – acetaminophen suppository, treats pain/fever

RECTAL MEDICATION COUNSELING

All rectal products

- For best results, empty the bowel immediately before use.

Enemas

- Remove the bottle from the pouch and shake well. Remove the protective sheath from the applicator tip. Hold the bottle at the neck to prevent any of the medication from being discharged.
- Best results are obtained by lying on the left side with the left leg extended and the right leg flexed forward for balance. Gently insert the medication or applicator tip into the rectum, pointed slightly toward the navel to prevent damage to the rectal wall.
- Grasp the bottle firmly, then tilt slightly so that the nozzle is aimed towards the back; squeeze slowly to instill the medication. Steady hand pressure will discharge most of the medication. After administering, withdraw and discard the bottle.
- Remain in position for at least 30 minutes, or preferably all night for maximum benefit.

Suppositories

- Detach one suppository from the strip. Remove the foil wrapper carefully while holding the suppository upright. Do not handle the suppository too much; heat from your hands and body can cause it to melt.
- Insert the suppository, with the pointed end first, completely into your rectum, using gentle pressure. Lubricating gel can be put on the suppository if needed.
- For best results, keep the suppository in your rectum for at least 1 – 3 hours.

VAGINAL MEDICATIONS

Medications administered vaginally can be used for local or systemic effects. Formulations given vaginally include suppositories, creams, ointments, inserts and tablets.

INHALATIONS

Inhaled medications provide immediate (rescue) and long-lasting (maintenance) benefits in lung disorders (e.g., asthma, COPD). The drug is delivered directly to the lungs, which minimizes systemic toxicities. Instructions for use are dependent on the type of device and the medication (see the Asthma, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease and Cystic Fibrosis chapters for details).

PATIENT COMMUNICATION

Counseling patients on safe and effective medication use is an essential role of pharmacists. Good communication skills are essential for pharmacists, and are linked to patient satisfaction and trust.

HEALTH LITERACY

Pharmacists provide valuable information to patients, but the effort is wasted if the information is not understood. Health literacy is the degree to which individuals are able to obtain, process and understand basic health and medication information to make appropriate health decisions (e.g., ability to correctly interpret a prescription label). Health literacy is different than being able to read or being well educated.

Low health literacy is linked to poor health outcomes. It can be an issue for any patient but is more common in the elderly, minority populations, those with lower income, poor health and limited English proficiency. A person's health literacy is dependent on age, communication skills, knowledge, experience and culture. Only about 12% of adults have proficient health literacy.

Do not make assumptions about a patient's health literacy. Approach all patients as if they may not understand the health information presented. Health literacy can be assessed using measurement tools, such as those published by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ).

PATIENT COUNSELING

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION AND EDUCATION STRATEGIES

- Use non-medical language ("layman's" language) that patients can understand (see the Counseling Language section). Example: say "tired" instead of "fatigued" or "high blood pressure" instead of "hypertension."
- Ask open-ended questions that require more than a "yes" or "no" answer. Example: "what questions can I answer about your medication today?" instead of "do you have questions?"
- Avoid leading questions. Example: "what about your high blood pressure concerns you?" instead of "are you concerned about the side effects from the high blood pressure medication?"
- Confirm understanding. Ask the patient to repeat the information or ask what they would tell their spouse or friend about the new medication.
- Use different communication strategies (verbal, written, visual aids) to enhance understanding. Ask the patient how they prefer to receive information.
- Use active listening. Clarifying or summarizing what the patient has said is helpful and gives the patient an opportunity to offer correction.
- Speak clearly, make eye contact, introduce yourself and refer to patients by their name. Avoid "sweetie," "dear" and other similar terms.

MISSED DOSES

- Most medications follow this general rule for when a dose is missed:
  - ☐ If you miss a dose, take it as soon as you remember. If it is almost time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and take the next dose at your regularly scheduled time. Do not take two doses at the same time unless instructed by your healthcare provider.
- Exceptions that do not follow these instructions are discussed in the individual chapters. This includes:
  - ☐ High-risk drugs (e.g., anticoagulants, transplant medications)
  - ☐ Oral contraceptives
  - ☐ Drugs that must be taken at specific times (e.g., phosphate binders, pancreatic enzymes and prandial insulin which is taken before a meal)

MEDICATION STORAGE AND DISPOSAL

Most medications can be stored in any cool, dry place (e.g., not in a bathroom to avoid humidity). Medications that require unique storage (e.g., in a refrigerator, in the original container) are highlighted in the individual disease state chapters.

Unused drugs in the home should be disposed of at a take-back location (e.g., pharmacy, police station) or mailed using a prepaid drug mail-back envelope. The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) website (dea.gov/takebackday) has a drop-off location finder.

Alternatively, drugs on FDA's Flush List (e.g., opioids, sodium oxybate, rectal diazepam) can be flushed down the toilet (see Pain chapter). Drugs not on this list (including hazardous drugs), should be mixed with an unappealing substance (e.g., dirt, cat litter) in a sealed bag and placed in household trash. Remove personal information (e.g., on prescription bottles) before disposal. See the Contraception & Infertility chapter for contraceptive patch and ring disposal.

ADHERENCE COUNSELING AND MONITORING

Pharmacists review refill histories to understand how a patient is using their medication at home. If the medication is for disease prevention/control, nonadherence implies that the patient does not understand how to use the medication, the importance of the medication (common with conditions with limited symptoms, such as hypertension), is experiencing side effects or requires assistance in remembering to take the drug (e.g., pill boxes or refill reminders).

If the drug is used as needed for acute symptoms (e.g., a rescue inhaler), a refill history can reveal how well the patient's condition is controlled. Infrequent use of a rescue/as needed medication means that the patient is not having symptoms frequently, whereas frequent use can imply that the patient is suffering from symptoms or not using the medication correctly.

To assess adherence, first evaluate the reason for the drug. Then use a refill history and patient report to understand issues impacting use (see Case Scenario).

Motivational interviewing helps the pharmacist better understand individual patient needs. It is a counseling approach that focuses on the patient's priorities to help facilitate change. Asking open-ended questions, employing empathy and reserving judgments will help to build patient relationships.

CASE SCENARIO

PK is a 43-year-old male who comes to the pharmacy today (11/14) for a refill of his medications. Upon reviewing his chart, the pharmacist sees the following refill history:

Last Fill	Rx	Medication	Sig	Quantity	Refills
10/24	64255	Sertraline 50 mg	Take one tablet by mouth daily for anxiety	30	1
10/24	64301	Lorazepam 1 mg	Take one tablet by mouth daily as needed for anxiety	30	1
10/1	64255	Sertraline 50 mg	Take one tablet by mouth daily for anxiety	30	2
10/1	64301	Lorazepam 1 mg	Take one tablet by mouth daily as needed for anxiety	30	2
9/12	64255	Sertraline 50 mg	Take one tablet by mouth daily for anxiety	30	3
9/12	64301	Lorazepam 1 mg	Take one tablet by mouth daily as needed for anxiety	30	3

Based on the instructions and your understanding of these medications, what is the purpose of each medication?
Sertraline is being used for maintenance/control of anxiety and lorazepam is being used as needed for acute symptoms of anxiety.

How long should each fill last, if used as instructed?
Each fill of sertraline (30 tablets) should last 30 days.
Each fill of lorazepam (30 tablets) should last at least 30 days, but longer if PK's anxiety is well controlled.

What does the refill history tell you?
PK is likely using both medications in the same way, as he is getting refills of both medications consistently at the same time. He may not be aware that his lorazepam should be used only when needed for symptoms, and that his sertraline should be taken daily (regardless of symptoms).

Also, his refills do not appear to be lasting a full month; he may be taking both medications more frequently than prescribed. A discussion with PK is warranted to determine why these trends have occurred and if he understands how these drugs should be taken. Open-ended, non-judgmental questions may best evaluate his understanding.

COUNSELING LANGUAGE

Key counseling points for medications are presented in individual chapters throughout this course book, in simplified lists for easier learning. When counseling a patient, layman's language should be used for a better understanding. In the following table you will find example language that can be used when counseling a patient on common drug-related issues.

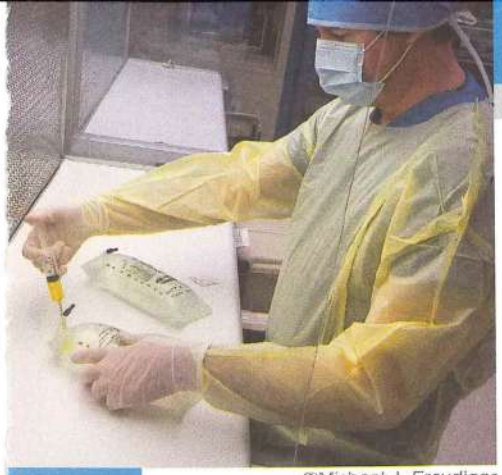
PATIENT COUNSELING	LANGUAGE TO USE
Allergy/anaphylaxis	Seek immediate medical help if you develop symptoms of a severe allergic reaction: severe rash with itching, redness or swelling, swelling in your face, lips, tongue or throat, severe dizziness, wheezing or trouble breathing.
Anticholinergic effects	This medication can cause dry mouth, constipation, difficulty urinating, dry eyes and blurred vision. For select anticholinergic medications, include: this medication can make you feel drowsy.
Avoid grapefruit	Avoid eating grapefruit or drinking grapefruit juice while using this medication. Grapefruit can lead to higher levels of the medication in your blood, which will increase side effects.

PATIENT COUNSELING	LANGUAGE TO USE
Avoid in pregnancy (teratogenic)	This medication can cause birth defects if taken during pregnancy. People who are pregnant or planning to become pregnant must not use this medication. Effective contraception is required.
Bleeding/bruising	This medication can cause bleeding, such as nosebleeds, bleeding gums and bruising. If you develop serious symptoms, such as coughing up blood or vomit that looks like coffee grounds, dark, tarry-looking stool, or bleeding in unusual places, such as blood in the urine or very large bruises, contact your prescriber immediately. Over-the-counter pain medications and natural products can increase bleeding risk. Talk to your pharmacist before taking any new medications.
Blood clot	This medication can increase the risk of a blood clot, which can be serious. Seek immediate medical help if you have symptoms of a clot. This can occur in your limbs, with symptoms such as swelling, redness or warmth in the lower leg (around the calf muscle) or arm. A blood clot in a lung or the heart can cause chest pain and trouble breathing. A clot in the brain (a stroke) can cause sudden confusion, numbness/weakness on one side of the body, trouble speaking or loss of consciousness.
Body fluid discoloration	This medication can change the color of your urine, saliva and sweat, and may stain clothing. This is not harmful. Some drugs can stain contact lenses.
Cancer	You are more likely to develop certain types of cancers while taking this medication, including skin cancer. Protect your skin from the sun. Use a broad-spectrum sunscreen, with an SPF of at least 30. Follow recommendations you are given for cancer screenings.
Constipation	This medication can cause constipation. A laxative or stool softener can be helpful. Drink plenty of water, exercise regularly and eat food with fiber such as fruits, vegetables and grains.
Contains phenylalanine – do not use in phenylketonuria (PKU)	This medication contains an artificial sweetener called phenylalanine. People with phenylketonuria (PKU) should not use products that contain phenylalanine.
Decreased heart rate	This medication can decrease heart rate, which can cause dizziness. When you rise from a sitting or lying position, move slowly and carefully to prevent a fall. You may be instructed to monitor your heart rate.
Delirium	This medication can cause confused thinking and unusual behaviors. Contact your healthcare provider if this develops.
Dehydration	This medication can cause dehydration. Symptoms include dry mouth, increased thirst, less frequent urination, dizziness, headache and dry skin. If you develop severe symptoms, such as a rapid breathing and dark-colored urine, contact your healthcare provider immediately. Dehydration in an infant is dangerous. Symptoms can include a sunken soft spot of the head (called a fontanelle), no tears when crying, lethargy and listlessness. Products like *Pedialyte* and *Enfalyte* can be used to replace fluids and minerals, such as sodium and potassium. Severe dehydration can require emergency medical treatment.
Depression/psychosis (also see suicidal ideation)	This medication can worsen or cause changes to your mood, including suicidal thoughts and behaviors. In some cases, your thoughts can become strange or psychotic. Notify your healthcare provider right away if your mood or behavior worsens.
Diarrhea	This medication can cause diarrhea. Drink fluids with electrolytes to prevent dehydration. Contact a healthcare provider if symptoms do not improve after a few days or if any of the following are present: age < 6 months, pregnancy, high fever (> 101°F), severe abdominal pain or blood in the stool.
Dizziness	This medication can cause dizziness, which is more likely to occur when you rise from a sitting or lying position. Rise slowly and carefully to prevent a fall.

PATIENT COUNSELING	LANGUAGE TO USE
Drowsiness	This medication can make you feel tired. Use caution when driving, operating machinery or performing other hazardous activities. Alcohol, sleeping pills, pain medications, antihistamines, antidepressants and other medications that cause drowsiness can make this side effect worse, which could be dangerous.
Drug interactions due to binding	This medication can bind to other medications and food, which can change the drug's absorption. Separate antacids, multivitamins/minerals, iron, magnesium, calcium, dairy products and calcium-rich foods from medications that can bind.
Drug interactions due to high gastric pH	This medication uses the acid in your stomach to be absorbed. If you are taking other medications to lower the acid in your stomach, such as heartburn medication, this medication will not work well. Talk to your pharmacist before taking medications to lower stomach acid.
Dry mouth	This medication can cause or worsen dry mouth. Sucking on sugarless hard candy or ice chips, sipping water or chewing sugarless gum can help. With dry mouth, it is especially important to keep your teeth clean to prevent cavities. Over-the-counter saliva substitutes can be helpful.
Dyspepsia	This medication can cause indigestion. Symptoms can include bloating, upset stomach, nausea, burping or heartburn. Taking the medication with food can be helpful. If the symptoms do not improve or worsen, contact your healthcare provider.
Edema	This medication can cause fluid and water to accumulate and cause swelling, especially in the ankles and legs. If you have heart disease, discuss the use of this medication with your healthcare provider, and monitor your weight.
Eye damage	Tell your healthcare provider immediately if you develop any eye pain or vision changes, such as seeing halos or having blurry vision.
Ghost tablet in stool	The tablet that contains this medication can pass into the stool. If there is a tablet in your stool, it is nothing to worry about; it is an empty tablet.
Gingival hyperplasia	This medication can cause swelling and growth of the gums around your teeth. Brush and floss often, and see your dentist for regular cleanings.
Heart failure	This medication can cause or worsen heart failure. Contact your healthcare provider if you develop symptoms, including trouble breathing, shortness of breath, rapid weight gain or swelling in the legs, ankles and feet.
Hyperglycemia	This medication can cause high blood sugar. Symptoms include more frequent urination and increased thirst and hunger. Check your blood sugar if you have a glucose meter. Tell your healthcare provider if you develop symptoms of high blood sugar.
Hyperthyroidism	This medication can change how your thyroid gland works. Tell your healthcare provider if you develop symptoms of an overactive thyroid, including increased sensitivity to heat, unexplained weight loss, thinning hair, unusual sweating, nervousness, irritability or restlessness. Tests can be ordered to check your thyroid function.
Hypoglycemia	This medication can cause low blood sugar. Symptoms can include dizziness, irritability, shakiness, sweating, hunger, confusion, fast heart rate and blurred vision. Check your blood sugar, if able, and eat or drink something with sugar, such as a ½ cup of orange juice or regular soda, 1 cup of milk, 1 tablespoon of honey or 3-4 glucose tablets or gel.
Hypothyroidism	This medication can lower the amount of thyroid hormone you produce. Tell your healthcare provider if you develop symptoms of low thyroid, including feeling tired or cold, weight gain, constipation or hair loss. Tests can be ordered to check your thyroid function.
Increased blood pressure	This medication can increase blood pressure. Monitor blood pressure as directed by your healthcare provider, especially if you have hypertension.

PATIENT COUNSELING	LANGUAGE TO USE
Increased heart rate	This medication can increase heart rate, which can cause dizziness. When you rise from a sitting or lying position, move slowly and carefully to prevent a fall. You may be instructed to monitor your heart rate.
Infection	This medication can lower your body's ability to fight infections. Avoid contact with people who are sick. Regular handwashing is one of the best ways to remove germs and avoid getting sick.
Injection site reaction	The spot where you inject this medication can become red, swollen, painful and itchy. If the area looks especially worrisome or is very painful, let your healthcare provider know.
Insomnia	This medication can cause difficulty sleeping. To improve your sleep, keep a regular sleep schedule and keep the bedroom dark, comfortable and quiet.
Lactic acidosis	This medication can cause a buildup of acid in the blood. Get immediate medical help if you feel very weak or tired, have unusual muscle pain, trouble breathing and/or stomach pain with nausea and vomiting.
Liver damage	This medication can damage the liver. Get medical help if you develop any of the following: yellowing of the white part of your eyes, yellowing of your skin, dark-colored urine, light-colored stool or bad stomach pain and nausea.
Lung damage	This medication can damage the lungs. Get medical help if you develop any of the following: severe/persistent cough, shortness of breath, chest pain or breathing that is difficult or painful.
Many drug interactions	There are many medications that can interact with this drug. Check with your healthcare provider or pharmacist before starting any new medications, including over-the-counter medications, vitamins and/or herbal products.
MedGuide required	This MedGuide contains important information about your medication. Take the MedGuide home and read it carefully so you understand the medication, and how to use it as safely as possible.
Muscle damage	This medication can cause muscle damage. If you develop unusual muscle pain, tenderness or weakness, or if you are urinating less than usual, get medical help.
Nausea	This medication can make you feel nauseous. Taking the medication with food and a glass of water can be helpful.
Nephrotoxicity	This medication can cause problems with the kidneys. Contact your prescriber right away if you have little or no urination, blood in the urine, swelling in your feet or ankles or rapid weight gain.
Orthostasis	This medication can cause your blood pressure to drop when you stand up, which can cause dizziness and light-headedness. This can cause falls and injuries. It is important to get up slowly when lying down or sitting, and to hold onto the bed rail or a strong tabletop until you feel steady.
Pancreatitis	This medication can damage the pancreas. If you are nauseous and have sharp pain in the upper abdomen that feels like it's radiating to your back, get medical help.
Paresthesia	This medication can cause a feeling of "pins and needles" in the legs, hands and feet. It is usually harmless.
Peripheral neuropathy	This medication can cause the nerves in your legs, feet, arms and/or fingers to become damaged. If you develop tingling, stabbing pain or numbness, such as in your feet, contact your prescriber.
Photosensitivity	This medication can cause your skin to be more sensitive to the sun. Stay out of the sun during midday hours, use sun-protective clothing and broad-spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of at least 30.

PATIENT COUNSELING	LANGUAGE TO USE
Priapism	If you develop a prolonged and painful erection that lasts more than four hours, stop using this medication and get medical help right away to avoid permanent damage to the penis.
QT prolongation	This medication can cause a condition called "QT prolongation," which makes the heartbeat too fast and not regular. This can cause dizziness and sudden fainting. If this happens, get immediate medical help. Check with your pharmacist before taking any new medications; other medications can make this more likely.
Rash	Mild rash: this medication can cause a mild rash. If it is itchy, taking 25 or 50 mg of diphenhydramine should help. Severe rash: this medication can cause a severe rash that begins with a fever and flu-like symptoms, followed by a bright red rash. This is an allergic reaction that requires immediate medical help. Some medications can cause both a mild and severe rash.
Reduces Vitamin ADEK absorption	This medication can block the amount of fat-soluble vitamins (A, D, E, K) that your body absorbs. Take a multivitamin at a different time of day than this medication.
Remove patch before an MRI	Some brands of this patch contain metal, which will burn your skin during an MRI. Remove the patch before an MRI.
Serotonin syndrome	This medication increases the level of serotonin in your blood. If it is taken with other over-the-counter or prescription medications that also increase serotonin, toxicity can occur. Seek urgent medical help if you feel dizzy, shaky, agitated, feverish and have a racing heartbeat.
Sexual dysfunction	This medication can cause sexual problems, including (select counseling point based on medication-specific side effects): ■ Decreased libido: low sexual drive/interest. ■ Ejaculation difficulties: anorgasmia (no ejaculation) or retrograde ejaculation (a "dry orgasm" or very little ejaculate during orgasm). ■ Erectile dysfunction (impotence): difficulty getting or maintaining an erection.
Stomach bleeding (especially for NSAIDs)	This medication can cause stomach bleeding. If your stools are black or tarry-looking, or if you are coughing or vomiting up blood that looks like coffee grounds, contact your healthcare provider immediately.
Subcutaneous injection	This medication is injected under the skin with a very short needle. Before injecting, wash your hands. Rotate where you inject, and do not inject into skin that is injured, tender or bruised.
Suicidal ideation (also see depression/ psychosis)	This medication can increase the risk of having suicidal thoughts. Contact your prescriber right away if you notice symptoms of depression, unusual behavior, changes in mood or thoughts of hurting yourself.
Urinary tract infection	This medication increases the risk of a urinary tract infection. Contact your prescriber if you experience burning when you urinate, or if you need to go to the bathroom more often, and suddenly. The urine can also be darker than usual.
Vision changes	This medication can cause vision changes. Tell your healthcare provider if you notice that colors seem different, if there are halos around lights or if your vision becomes blurry.



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CHAPTER 7

INTRAVENOUS MEDICATION PRINCIPLES

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= Key Drugs Guy

BACKGROUND

Enteral administration [through the gastrointestinal (GI) tract] is the preferred route for drug delivery. When enteral administration is not feasible, a parenteral route (outside of the GI tract) is used. Routes for parenteral drug administration include intravenous (IV), intramuscular and subcutaneous. Other parenteral routes are used for specific purposes, including intra-articular (into the joint) and intrathecal (into the space under the arachnoid membrane of the spinal cord). The intrathecal route is often used by anesthesiologists and for some chemotherapy, but intrathecal administration of select drugs is contraindicated (e.g., intrathecal vincristine is fatal).

IV DRUG DELIVERY

Oral drugs require gut dissolution and absorption, which takes time. Common reasons to use a parenteral route of administration include:

- In hospitalized patients who are NPO (nothing by mouth) or when the gut needs to be bypassed (e.g., surgery, malabsorption).
- Drugs with low oral bioavailability (e.g., vancomycin, which is only used orally to treat *C. difficile*).
- When fast onset is needed (e.g., emergencies, such as using a vasopressor to raise blood pressure).

This chapter focuses on the aspects of intravenous administration that are important to the pharmacist, including venous access (IV lines), compatibility and stability issues and administration requirements.

PHYSIOCHEMICAL CONSIDERATIONS

OSMOLARITY AND TONICITY

Osmolarity and tonicity are related terms; both are used to express the solute concentration in solution. Osmolarity reflects all solutes per liter of solution and tonicity reflects the pressure gradient (and potential fluid shifts) created by solutes that do not cross biological membranes (e.g., the vasculature). Both impact intravenous drug administration.

OSMOLARITY OF INTRAVENOUS FORMULATIONS

Sodium chloride solutions greater than 0.9% (osmolarity ~308 mOsm/L) are hypertonic. Hypertonic saline (commonly 3% or 23.4%) is used in the acute care setting, such as treating hyponatremia (3%) or preparing parenteral nutrition (23.4%). However, hypertonic saline injections can be fatal if given erroneously. When administered into a peripheral vein (see section on Peripheral Lines), the high concentration of solutes relative to the concentration in the blood will cause water to move out of red blood cells (RBCs), which causes the RBCs to become shriveled and dysfunctional.

To avoid adverse outcomes, hypertonic saline is often restricted to the pharmacy and only dispensed for administration in areas of the hospital where safety can be monitored (e.g., a critical care unit).

When a preparation has a lower osmolarity than blood (i.e., is hypotonic), RBCs will absorb fluid. This can cause hemolysis (i.e., RBCs bursting) and be fatal.

In general, ½NS (0.45% sodium chloride), which has an osmolarity of 154 mOsm/L, is the lowest saline concentration that should be administered intravenously. Lower saline concentrations, such as ¼NS (0.225%), can be administered with other fluids that will increase the osmolarity, such as 5% dextrose. Osmolarity is discussed in more detail in the Calculations II chapter.

pH

Blood has an alkaline pH of 7.35 – 7.45. The carbonic acid-bicarbonate system buffers changes in pH:

- When blood becomes more basic, the pH rises. Hydrogen ions are released from carbonic acid, which causes the pH to lower.
- When blood becomes more acidic, the pH falls. Hydrogen ions get picked up (more bicarbonate binds with protons), which causes the pH to rise.

Drugs that are administered intravenously must be formulated to keep the pH within a narrow range to avoid damaging the veins and other tissues and for drug stability in solution. A buffer system (similar to that in the body) may be needed to maintain pH. See the Calculations IV chapter for more discussion on pH.

VENOUS CATHETERS

A catheter is a piece of tubing that is inserted into the body to put fluids in or take them out (e.g., a urinary catheter). A catheter inserted into a vein is called a venous catheter and is used for drug delivery. A venous catheter is also called a line, and the patient is said to have IV access. Lines come in two primary types: peripheral and central.

PERIPHERAL LINES

Percutaneous means through the skin and peripheral refers to locations away from the body's central compartment, such as the arms and legs. Most IV drugs can be delivered through percutaneous, peripheral venous catheters that are inserted into smaller veins. Common veins used for peripheral venous catheters are the cephalic vein in the arm, metacarpal veins in the hand and the saphenous vein near the ankle.

Peripheral lines are simpler and less expensive to insert than central lines, but they have limitations. Administering drugs into a smaller vein can cause phlebitis (vein irritation), venous thrombosis (clots) and interstitial fluid extravasation (when the infusion contents enter surrounding tissue).

CENTRAL LINES

A central line empties into a larger vein and the contents are quickly diluted. Central lines provide secure, long-term vascular access and are required for the administration of:

- Highly concentrated drugs (e.g., potassium chloride > 10 mEq/100 mL)
- Long-term antibiotics (e.g., to treat osteomyelitis)
- Drugs that would cause severe phlebitis or tissue damage [e.g., chemotherapy, especially vesicants (see next column)] if given peripherally
- Drugs with a pH that is not close to blood pH
- Drugs with high osmolarity (i.e., > ~900 mOsm/L), such as parenteral nutrition

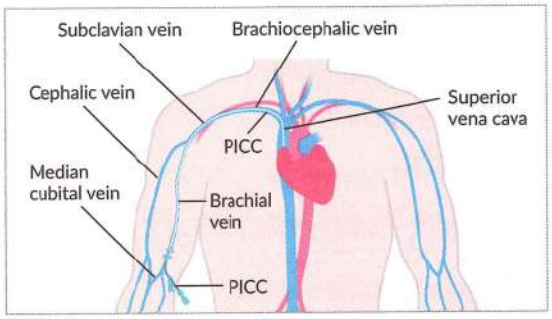
Additional benefits of a central line include the ability to administer higher volumes and infuse at faster rates.

CENTRAL LINE PLACEMENT

To be considered a central line, the catheter tip must be located in a large vessel (e.g., superior vena cava, inferior vena cava). The catheter can reach these locations by being inserted into a proximal central vein or a peripheral vein. Proximal central veins include the internal jugular vein (in the neck), subclavian vein (under the collarbone) or femoral vein (in the groin). Dialysis catheters are placed in this manner.

Peripherally inserted central catheters (PICC) are inserted by placing the line into a peripheral vein and advancing (pushing) the catheter through the vein until the tip ends in the superior vena cava (where the infusion contents are released) (see figure below).

Central line placement is confirmed with an X-ray to confirm that the tip has reached the right location.



VESICANTS ARE SAFER WITH A CENTRAL LINE

A vesicant is a drug that will cause severe tissue damage if the catheter tip comes out of the vein, allowing the drug to seep into surrounding tissues (i.e., extravasates). Vesicants are preferentially administered through a central line because the line is less likely to become dislodged from the vein. Vesicants include vasopressors (e.g., dopamine, norepinephrine), anthracyclines (e.g., doxorubicin), vinca alkaloids (e.g., vincristine), digoxin, foscarnet, mannitol, mitomycin, nafcillin and promethazine.

PROMETHAZINE CAN CAUSE SEVERE TISSUE INJURY

It is removed from some formularies due to this risk.

IM administration is preferred, but also risks tissue injury. Intra-arterial or SC routes should not be used.

If using IV: dilute the drug, limit the dose and monitor.

INCOMPATIBILITIES

Incompatible means that substances are unsuitable for use together. The end result could be a chemical (e.g., drug degradation) or physical (e.g., color change, precipitation) change and a patient safety concern.

CHEMICAL INCOMPATIBILITY

Chemical incompatibility causes drug degradation or toxicity due to hydrolysis, oxidation or decomposition. These reactions are discussed in more detail in the Basic Science Concepts chapter.

PHYSICAL INCOMPATIBILITY

Physical incompatibilities occur between a drug and one of the following:

- The container (e.g., polyvinyl chloride container)
- The diluent (solution) (e.g., dextrose or saline)
- Another drug

CONTAINER INCOMPATIBILITY

DEHP from the Container

The majority of polyvinyl chloride (PVC) containers use diethylhexyl phthalate (DEHP) as a plasticizer to make the plastic bag more flexible. DEHP can leach from the container into the solution. DEHP is toxic and can harm the liver and, possibly, male fertility.

Container Absorption/Adsorption

Absorption occurs when drug moves into the PVC container, and adsorption occurs when drug adheres to the container; both reduce the drug's concentration.

Alternative (Non-PVC) Containers

Drugs that have leaching, absorption or adsorption issues with PVC containers can be placed in polyolefin, polypropylene or glass containers. See the Key Drugs Guy in the next column for drugs that should not be placed in PVC containers.

Insulin and PVC Containers

Insulin adsorbs to PVC, but clinicians adjust the rate of insulin infusions to obtain blood glucose control, regardless of the type of IV container and tubing used.

DRUGS THAT REQUIRE NON-PVC CONTAINERS

Lorazepam
Amiodarone
Tacrolimus
Taxanes*
Insulin
Nitroglycerin

Remember: **L**each **A**bsorbs **T**o **T**ake **I**n **N**utrients

**Exception: Paclitaxel-albumin (Abraxane) can be put in PVC.*

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DILUENT INCOMPATIBILITY

When drugs are diluted in solution for IV administration, they are commonly placed into an IV bag that contains 5% dextrose (D5W) or 0.9% sodium chloride (normal saline, NS). For most drugs, either solution is acceptable, but some drugs cannot be put into dextrose, and others cannot be put into saline (see Key Drugs Guy below and on the following page). Drugs may also be compatible with sterile water, but that would be for reconstitution (e.g., for a drug that comes as a powder), not for diluting in large volumes for infusion.

DRUGS TO MIX IN DEXTROSE ONLY

Remember: **O**nly **S**ugar **A**lways
Oxaliplatin
Sulfamethoxazole/trimethoprim
Amphotericin B (all)

GreenSkyStudio/stock.adobe.com

DRUGS TO MIX IN SALINE ONLY

Remember:
A DIAbetic **C**an't **E**at **P**ie

Ampicillin*

Daptomycin

Infliximab

Ampicillin/Sulbactam *(Unasyn)**

Caspofungin *(Cancidas)*

Ertapenem *(Invanz)*

Phenytoin *(Dilantin)*

**Stability in dextrose is much shorter.*

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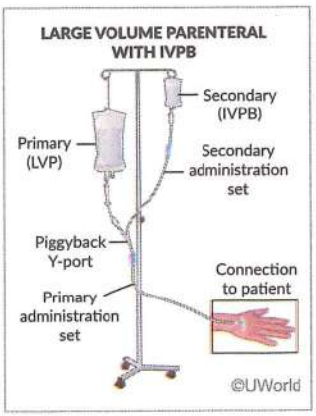
DRUG-DRUG INCOMPATIBILITY

Hospitalized patients usually receive IV fluids with multiple IV medications. To minimize the number of peripheral and central lines, infusion bags can be joined at a Y-site and administered in the same line.

Y-Site Administration: Mixing Drugs in the Line

A Y-site describes the shape that forms when lines (from different IV containers) are joined prior to entering the patient. Often, the larger container is the patient's fluids and the smaller IV bag [called an IV piggyback (IVPB)] contains a drug. Since the drugs mix together briefly in the common portion of the IV tubing, it is important that the drugs and solutions are compatible with Y-site administration.



ADDITIVE COMPATIBILITY: MIXING DRUGS IN THE SAME CONTAINER

Additive compatibility needs to be confirmed when putting multiple drugs in the same container or syringe. Drugs mixed in the same container will be in contact for a longer period of time (compared to Y-site administration), so compatibility may differ. Additive compatibility and Y-site compatibility are often listed separately in drug references.

HIGH-RISK INCOMPATIBILITIES

A dangerous example of incompatibility involves ceftriaxone and calcium. Ceftriaxone cannot be mixed with any calcium-containing solutions due to the risk of precipitates. Lactated Ringer's, a common IV fluid, contains calcium and cannot be mixed with ceftriaxone, including Y-site administration. This combination must be avoided in all age groups; neonates have the highest risk for lethal effects.

Calcium and phosphate can form a deadly precipitate in intravenous fluids. The Calculations III chapter discusses methods to prevent calcium-phosphate precipitation when preparing parenteral nutrition.

Information regarding incompatibilities is extensive. Many commonly used drugs (e.g., heparin, quinolones, piperacillin/tazobactam, amphotericin B, caspofungin, sodium bicarbonate) are incompatible with other commonly used drugs.

Reputable resources for compatibility information include *ASHP Injectable Drug Information*, *Trissel's 2 Clinical Pharmaceutics Database*, the *King Guide to Parenteral Admixtures* (commonly called *King's)* and the drug's package insert (see Drug References chapter). Recent concerns regarding compatibility issues can also be found in *Pharmacy Practice News* and *Hospital Pharmacy.* The next section provides an example of how these resources are used in practice.

BEWARE!

Mixing Together Can Be Fatal

Risk of precipitates→ emboli→ fatality

Calcium & Ceftriaxone*

Calcium & Phosphate**

**Lactated Ringer's contains calcium.*

***When calcium and phosphate are both put into parenteral nutrition, methods must be used to reduce the risk of precipitation.*

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REFERENCE TABLE INTERPRETATION

The tables here are similar to those used to check drug compatibility. The reference drug is at the top of the table (cefepime) and the drug tested with it for compatibility is in the row below (gentamicin). The first table reports that cefepime and gentamicin are incompatible (I in the last column) when mixed together in either D5W or NS, at the concentrations listed. In addition, the remarks ("cloudiness") indicate that a precipitate formed.

CEFEPIME

DRUG	MFR	CONC/L	MFR	CONC/L	TEST SOLN	REMARKS	REF	C/I
Gentamicin	ES	1.2 g	BR	40 g	D5W, NS	Cloudiness forms in 18 hr at room temp	588	I

C = compatible; I = incompatible

In this next example, the pharmacist will find that cefepime and gentamicin are compatible for Y-site administration at the concentrations listed, indicated by the "C" in the far right column and by the remarks.

CEFEPIME

DRUG	MFR	CONC	MFR	CONC	REMARKS	REF	C/I
Gentamicin	ES	6 mg/mL	BMS	120 mg/mL	Physically compatible with less than 10% cefepime loss. Gentamicin was not tested.	2212	C

Y-Site Injection Compatibility (1:1 Mixture); C = compatible; I = incompatible

FILTERS

Filters can be required during drug compounding, administration or both. In-line filters (attached to the IV tubing) are used to administer drugs that have a risk of particulates, precipitates, crystals, contaminants or entrapped air in the final solution. The size of the filter required is determined by the size of the particles to be removed. Most drugs which require a filter use a 0.22 micron filter (1 micron = 1/1,000 mm). Another common filter size is 1.2 micron, which is used for parenteral nutrition to catch calcium-phosphate particulates, and for injectable lipid emulsions. Large molecule drugs, including many liposomal formulations of chemotherapy drugs, must not be filtered due to the size of the drug particle. See the Key Drugs Guy to the right for common drugs that require a filter with IV administration.

If compounding IV medications packaged in glass ampules, a filter needle or filter straw is used when withdrawing the solution from the ampule to prevent glass particulates from entering the IV bag; an in-line filter may also be required during administration.

COMMON DRUGS WITH FILTER REQUIREMENTS

KEY DRUGS

Remember: My **GAL Is PAT** who has a **MaP**

Golimumab

Amphotericin B (lipid formulations)*

Lipids-1.2 micron

Isavuconazonium

Phenytoin**

Amiodarone

Taxanes (cabazitaxel, paclitaxel)

Mannitol ≥ 20%

Parenteral nutrition-1.2 micron

**Larger pore (5 micron) filter required*
***Requires a filter when administered by continuous infusion, not IV push*

Others:

Abatacept

Albumin (select products)

Antithymocyte globulin

Infliximab

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belokrylowa/stock.adobe.com

TEMPERATURE & STABILITY

A drug that is "stable" will be stable only at select concentrations, for a certain time, at a certain temperature and with a certain degree of light exposure.

TIME IN SOLUTION

Drugs in solution decompose faster than solid (e.g., powder) formulations. The likelihood of a chemical reaction that degrades the drug increases with time. Compatibility concerns due to longer infusion times are an important issue with antibiotic extended infusions (e.g., piperacillin/tazobactam). The longer infusion period can be more efficacious, but can result in more compatibility issues and drug interactions.

TEMPERATURE

Higher temperatures speed up chemical reactions and break down proteins. Most IV drugs are refrigerated to permit longer stability (i.e., a longer period until the expiration or beyond-use date), but there are exceptions. For example, because furosemide and phenytoin crystallize if kept cold, they are stored at room temperature. See the Key Drugs Guy below for IV drugs that are kept at room temperature.

DO NOT REFRIGERATE

KEY DRUGS

Remember:
Dear **S**weet **P**harmacist,
Freezing **M**akes **M**e **E**dgy!

Dexmedetomidine*
Sulfamethoxazole/Trimethoprim
Phenytoin – crystallizes
Furosemide – crystallizes*
Metronidazole
Moxifloxacin
Enoxaparin

**Optional: diluted dexmedetomidine and furosemide can be kept cold.*

Acetaminophen
Acyclovir – crystallizes
Deferoxamine – precipitates
Levetiracetam
Pentamidine – crystallizes
Valproate

iStock.com/hendart, igorshi

LIGHT EXPOSURE

Light exposure causes photodegradation, which destroys some drugs, and in some cases, increases a drug's toxicity (e.g., nitroprusside). Many medications should be protected from light during storage to avoid degradation. Some medications are supplied in amber (light-protected) vials, and others are stored in the original packaging (foil overwrap or box) until needed. Some drugs are so light-sensitive that they require protection from light during administration. Pharmacy staff dispense these medications with a light-protective cover. In some cases, light-protective tubing is needed. See the Key Drugs Guy below for a list of drugs that require light protection during administration.

PROTECT FROM LIGHT DURING ADMINISTRATION

KEY DRUGS

Remember:
Protect **E**very **N**ecessary **M**ed from **D**aylight

Phytonadione (vitamin K)
Epoprostenol
Nitroprusside
Micafungin
Doxycycline

Others:
Amphotericin B Deoxycholate
Anthracyclines
Dacarbazine (if extravasates, protect exposed tissues from light)
Pentamidine

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DO NOT SHAKE/AGITATE

Agitation destroys some drugs, including hormones and other proteins. Drugs that are easily destroyed/damaged should not be shaken during compounding or transport, and can not be transported via pneumatic tube systems. Examples include:

- Protein/blood products, such as albumin, immune globulins, monoclonal antibodies and insulin
- Products that foam, such as alteplase, etanercept, rasburicase and caspofungin; instead, swirl when reconstituting and wait for foam to dissolve
- Reconstituted vaccines, such as varicella zoster vaccine
- Emulsions, such as propofol and injectable lipid emulsions

CHECK SOLUTIONS FOR COLOR CHANGES

Most intravenous medications are clear and colorless. In some cases, discoloration is of little or no consequence. However, in most cases, discoloration indicates oxidation or another type of decomposition.

DRUG	DO NOT USE WITH COLOR CHANGE	NOTES
Chlorpromazine	Darker than slight yellow	Slight yellow: potency retained, okay to use
Dacarbazine	Pink	
Dobutamine		Oxidation turns the solution slightly pink, but potency is not lost
Dopamine	Darker than slight yellow	Slight yellow: potency retained, okay to use
Epinephrine	Pink, then brown	
Isoproterenol	Pink or darker	Damaged by air, light, heat
Morphine	Dark	
Nitroprusside	Orange → brown → blue	Blue indicates nearly complete dissociation to cyanide
Norepinephrine	Pink or darker	
Tigecycline	Green/black	Normal color: yellow/orange

IV DRUGS THAT COME AS COLORED SOLUTIONS

DRUG	COLOR OF IV FLUID	SKIN AND SECRETIONS DISCOLORATION
Anthracyclines (e.g., doxorubicin)	Red	Sweat and urine
Rifampin		Saliva, urine, sweat and tears
Mitoxantrone	Blue	Skin, eyes, urine
Methotrexate	Yellow	None
Multivitamins for Infusion (MVI)		
Tigecycline	Yellow/Orange	Teeth (if used during teeth development)
IV Iron, various	Brown	Urine

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CHECK SOLUTIONS FOR PARTICULATES

The clinician (or the patient if using a self-injectable) should always check parenteral solutions for particulate matter. If particulates are present, the drug should be discarded.

Select Guidelines/References

ASHP Injectable Drug Information, 2023 Ed. American Society of Health-System Pharmacists. 2023.

King Guide to Parenteral Admixtures. https://www.kingguide.com/online.html (accessed 2025 Mar 17).

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CHAPTER 8

PATIENT CARE & PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

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= Study Tip Gal = Required Formula

BACKGROUND

Pharmacists have extensive access to patient-specific information, including laboratory and diagnostic test results and progress notes from other healthcare providers. With this access comes a professional responsibility to correctly interpret the information and effectively apply it to patient care (e.g., drug therapy recommendations, patient counseling).

Similarly, questions on the NAPLEX are presented mainly in a case-based format to better reflect the role of pharmacists in healthcare. Some of the information provided in the case will be needed to correctly answer the questions. The goal is to assess whether the pharmacist can make the best choices for a specific patient versus simply recalling facts. This better reflects the role of pharmacists in healthcare today.

This chapter reviews principles of patient assessment and management, including how to interpret and use a patient's medical record to correctly answer case-based questions on the exam. It also includes information on professionalism in patient care, such as ethical considerations and training other pharmacists (e.g., mentorship, preceptorship).

PATIENT ASSESSMENT

When evaluating a patient, whether by reviewing their medical record or by a personal interview, it is crucial to recognize the factors that shape their identity and what matters most to them.

The social determinants of health (SDOH) refer to the conditions in the environment (i.e., nonmedical factors) that significantly affect health outcomes, functioning and quality of life. They are grouped into five domains (see Study Tip Gal). Examples of SDOH include education, income, safe housing, transportation, access to nutritious foods and clean water, language and literacy. Health literacy is discussed in the Drug Formulations & Patient Counseling chapter.

While the SDOH are not direct medical factors, they have a major impact on a person's health and well-being and should play a role in healthcare decisions. Evaluating and understanding a patient's SDOH can greatly reduce barriers and improve health outcomes.

SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

Source: Healthy People 2030, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. Retrieved February 19, 2025, from https://odphp.health.gov/healthypeople/objectives-and-data/social-determinants-health

Use of patient-specific assessment tools may be driven by individual factors, such as the patient's age. For example, the 4M's framework, which stands for Mentation, Mobility, what Matters (to the patient) and Medication, is designed to promote age-friendly care for older adults. By considering these elements, treatment decisions can be tailored to meet the goals of the patient while avoiding potentially harmful or unnecessary treatments.

THE PATIENT MEDICAL RECORD

The patient medical record (PMR) provides complete documentation of a patient's medical history at a particular institution. The PMR can be referred to as the "medical record" or the "chart," which are terms from the era of paper records (though paper charts have largely been phased out).

Electronic health records (EHRs) improve accuracy, accessibility and efficiency. For example, if a patient is admitted to the hospital with an elevated SCr, the EHR provides current and previous lab results to determine if this is a new finding, and what recent workup has been completed. Procedures or faxed records from another facility can be quickly scanned into the EHR. EHRs also allow providers to have immediate access to information when they are off-site. Some community pharmacies have access to EHRs of affiliated clinics.

When the EHR is linked to Computerized Prescriber Order Entry (CPOE) and electronic prescribing (e-prescribing), the problem of illegible handwriting is eliminated. The CPOE system can be designed to present only formulary drugs with proper dosing as options. As a result, pharmacists spend less time clarifying orders or changing to a formulary drug. Clinical decision support (CDS) tools can be built into the order entry process. Examples include order sets, pathways, limited drop-down menus that reflect the preferred drugs, drug interaction checking and dose checking alerts. Refer to the Medication Safety & Quality Improvement chapter for details.

SECTIONS OF THE PATIENT MEDICAL RECORD

The first additions to the PMR are the patient's demographic data (including insurance information), admission details, a service agreement form ("this is what I am having done at this facility"), a page describing the patient's rights (a Joint Commission requirement) and an advance directive. An advance directive is a legal document that outlines the patient's wishes concerning medical treatment if they are unable to make decisions on their own behalf. Allergies may be here or listed in a separate area of the PMR.

Certain religious groups will refuse blood transfusions and blood products, which will need to be documented in the PMR. Blood products include albumin and immune globulins, but can also include drugs buffered in blood (e.g., epoetin alfa), natural clotting factors/tissue adhesives/interferons and other products. A few vaccines contain porcine-derived gelatin as a stabilizer. Most religious groups consider this use acceptable, but a specific patient may not.

Other sections in the PMR include progress notes, vital signs, laboratory tests, monitoring flowsheets used for some medications (e.g., warfarin to track the INR history), medication administration records and procedure reports, including the diagnostic and operating room records. At the end of the hospital stay, the planning and discharge forms are added.

DOCUMENTATION AND QUALITY OF CARE

Pharmacists often make verbal recommendations. While these may be effective, they are not part of the PMR and do not allow the information to be shared with other healthcare providers involved in the patient's care. Interventions require documentation for reimbursement since the quality of the care is (increasingly) tied to the payment. Departments of pharmacy should have policies in place that describe the authority of pharmacists to document in the PMR, what activities require documentation and the proper format for documentation. Some activities that pharmacists may document in the PMR include patient counseling, medication histories, consultations (e.g., pharmacokinetics, anticoagulation) and dosage adjustments. Documenting in the PMR is critical to establishing pharmacists as members of the healthcare team.

When documenting information in the PMR, it is important to avoid abbreviations that could be misinterpreted. The list of "Do Not Use" abbreviations should be easily available (see the Medication Safety & Quality Improvement chapter).

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) provides health insurance to many Americans. CMS is directly involved with quality measurements and cost control. CMS has penalties for poor care and incentives for quality care. Two areas in which the penalties are steep are the rate of hospital-acquired infections and the hospital's readmission rate. These measures are chosen because they are expensive and are often, but not always, avoidable.

The Joint Commission, the Pharmacy Quality Alliance (PQA) and the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) are involved in setting the criteria to measure the quality of care. The PQA quality measurements focus on medications. Specific goals include increasing adherence, avoiding unnecessary or unsafe medications (e.g., high-risk medications in older adults) and increasing the use of medications indicated for certain conditions (e.g., statin use in diabetes).

MEDICARE & MEDICAID

Medicare is the federal health insurance program for people ≥ 65 years old, < 65 with a disability and patients of all ages with end stage renal disease.

- Part A covers the hospital visit.
- Part B covers medical costs (e.g., doctor visits, some vaccines).
- Part D covers prescription drugs.

Medicaid provides health insurance for patients of all ages with low income (< 133% of the federal poverty level). Medicaid is a federal and state program. A senior who qualifies for both Medicare and Medicaid has "dual coverage."

THE SOAP NOTE FORMAT

A progress note records a patient encounter. One common method of organizing a progress note is the SOAP format, which organizes the information into four parts: Subjective, Objective, Assessment and Plan (SOAP). Prior to the use of SOAP notes, it was difficult to understand patient chart entries because the format was not standardized. An example SOAP note from an EHR is included later in this chapter.

SUBJECTIVE

The first section in a SOAP note is the subjective information recorded from the patient (or their caregiver). It is the narrative of the patient's symptoms. Only the relevant information is recorded. The person conducting the interview should use open-ended and direct questions while avoiding closed-ended and leading questions. For example, the leading question: "You always take your blood pressure pills, right?" is unlikely to result in a useful response. Rephrasing the question to be specific and avoid a "yes or no" response will be more useful: "In a typical week, about how many mornings do you forget to take your blood pressure pills?"

The subjective section contains:

- A one-line chief complaint (CC). This is the specific reason the patient is being seen today, such as "I've had a stabbing pain in my right hip for three days."
- A detailed history of present illness (HPI). The HPI contains the onset and duration of the CC, the quality and severity (e.g., a numerical pain rating), any modifying factors that reduce or aggravate the condition, treatments that have been tried and the effect of the treatment.
- A detailed past medical history (PMH) with social history (alcohol, tobacco and illicit drug use), family history (first-degree relatives only – parents and siblings), allergies and patient-reported medication use. Medications include prescriptions, over-the-counter (OTC) drugs, vitamins and natural products. Information on start date and last refill is important when recording medication information.

OBJECTIVE

The second section in a SOAP note is the objective information obtained by the clinician, either through observation or analysis. This includes:

- Vital signs (respiration rate, heart rate, blood pressure and temperature). Note that in the sample EHR later in this chapter, the vitals are at the top of the page, but vital signs are objective data.
- Other measurements (e.g., height, weight), physical findings, diagnostic tests performed (e.g., ECG, chest X-ray, urinalysis) and laboratory results.
- The medication list, if it is obtained from a source other than the patient (i.e., objectively verified), such as recording information from prescription bottles or calling another pharmacy.

Critical results are lab values significantly outside the reference range. Since these can indicate a life-threatening situation, they must be reported to a healthcare provider and addressed quickly. This is a Joint Commission National Patient Safety Goal.

UNITS OF MEASURE

Measurements should be documented according to the policies of the institution, and are generally reported using metric system units (e.g., kg, cm). Recording weights and heights with incorrect units (150 pounds vs. 150 kg) can have fatal consequences in terms of dosing medications. Refer to the Calculations I chapter for height and weight conversions.

In the U.S., temperatures are still frequently recorded in degrees Fahrenheit and may need to be converted to degrees Celsius. The route that the temperature was taken should be recorded (i.e., rectal, oral, axillary, tympanic). Temperatures taken rectally or orally are more accurate than if taken by axillary (under the arm) or tympanic (in the ear) methods.

TEMPERATURE CONVERSIONS

$^{\circ}C = (^{\circ}F - 32)/1.8$	$^{\circ}F = (^{\circ}C \times 1.8) + 32$

CASE SCENARIO

A patient has a temperature of 101.6°F. What is this temperature in degrees Celsius? Round to the nearest TENTH.

$$^{\circ}C = \frac{(101.6^{\circ}F - 32)}{1.8} = 38.7^{\circ}C$$

SELECT DRUGS AND CONDITIONS THAT ALTER VITAL SIGNS

Make note of drugs that cause "↓ HR" or "↑ BP" while studying. On the exam, you might be asked about the possible cause of an abnormal vital sign. The table below is not all-inclusive; some conditions have variable effects on vital signs depending on severity (e.g., infection, withdrawal, poisoning). This information will be covered in more detail in the individual disease state chapters.

VITAL SIGN	INCREASED	DECREASED
Blood Pressure (BP)	"Hypertension" **Drugs** See Key Drugs Guy in Hypertension chapter **Conditions** ■ Renal insufficiency/failure ■ Pregnancy ■ Excess salt intake ■ Obesity ■ Adrenal tumors	"Hypotension" **Drugs** ■ Antihypertensives ■ Vasodilators ■ Opioids ■ Benzodiazepines ■ Anesthetics ■ Phosphodiesterase inhibitors **Conditions** ■ Anaphylaxis ■ Blood loss ■ Infection (esp. sepsis) ■ Dehydration (orthostatic hypotension)
Heart Rate (HR)	"Tachycardia" **Drugs** ■ Stimulants (ADHD, weight loss drugs) ■ Decongestants ■ Beta-agonists (esp. overuse) ■ Theophylline (esp. in toxicity) ■ Anticholinergics (tricyclics, antihistamines) ■ Bupropion ■ Antipsychotics ■ Excess caffeine/nicotine, illicit drug use ■ Vasodilators (e.g., nitrates, hydralazine, dihydropyridine CCBs) cause reflex tachycardia **Conditions** ■ Some arrhythmias (e.g., atrial fibrillation, ventricular tachycardia) ■ Hyperthyroidism ■ Anemia ■ Dehydration ■ Anxiety, stress, pain ■ Hypoglycemia ■ Infection ■ Drug withdrawal ■ Serotonin syndrome	"Bradycardia" **Drugs** ■ Beta-blockers ■ Non-dihydropyridine CCBs ■ Digoxin ■ Clonidine, guanfacine ■ Antiarrhythmics (esp. Class III) ■ Opioids ■ Sedatives ■ Anesthetics ■ Neuromuscular blockers ■ Acetylcholinesterase inhibitors **Conditions** ■ Some arrhythmias (sinus bradycardia) ■ Hypothyroidism
Respiratory Rate (RR)	"Tachypnea" **Drugs** ■ Stimulants **Conditions** ■ Asthma and COPD (esp. when poorly controlled) ■ Anxiety, stress ■ Ketoacidosis ■ Pneumonia	"Respiratory depression" **Drugs** ■ Opioids ■ Sedatives **Conditions** ■ Hypothyroidism
Temperature (Temp)	"Hyperthermia" **Drugs** ■ Inhaled anesthetics (malignant hyperthermia) ■ Antipsychotics (neuroleptic malignant syndrome) ■ Topiramate **Conditions** ■ Fever ■ Hyperthyroidism (esp. thyroid storm) ■ Trauma ■ Cancer ■ Serotonin syndrome	"Hypothermia" **Conditions** ■ Exposure to cold ■ Hypothyroidism (esp. myxedema coma) ■ Hypoglycemia

ASSESSMENT

The third section of the SOAP note is the assessment. This is the provider's thought process of possible causes of the current situation. Many conditions present with similar signs and symptoms; the assessment will often include a differential diagnosis, which is a list of possible diagnoses that could explain the patient's current signs and symptoms. Each diagnosis on the list will be investigated.

PLAN

The fourth section is the plan. This is how problems will be addressed. The plan should be as specific as possible. Labs might be ordered, the patient might require diagnostic exams, referrals may be requested or the patient may require education (e.g., the importance of medication adherence, device technique, nutritional guidance, smoking cessation counseling). If there is a differential diagnosis, there will be multiple steps in the plan to eliminate ("rule out") some of the possible conditions. Patients often have many medical problems, and they may be vastly different from the symptoms that prompted them to seek care.

MILITARY TIME

erikamit/stock.adobe.com

In all medical records, including the SOAP note, time is recorded with a 24-hour clock, rather than splitting the day into two 12-hour segments (AM/PM). The 24-hour clock is called "military time." The day begins at midnight, which is called 24:00 (pronounced "twenty-four hundred"). This is the start of the day and is sometimes referred to as 00:00. After 12:00 noon the time continues on the same number scale for the rest of the day: 1:00 PM is 13:00, 2:00 PM is 14:00, and so on. The last minute of the day is 23:59, then 24:00 (midnight), and then the next day begins. Some clocks are labeled for military time (see image).

To convert military time back to 12-hour segments (AM/PM), simply subtract 12 from any number ≥ 13 (e.g., 16:00 = 4 pm, because 16 − 12 = 4).

ANSWERING CASE-BASED QUESTIONS ON THE EXAM

Pharmacists caring for patients (or taking the NAPLEX) are often faced with evaluating complex medication regimens. In order to provide the best care possible, a systematic approach to the assessment of the treatment plan and medication regimen is warranted.

IDENTIFYING MEDICATION THERAPY PROBLEMS

Pharmacists should assess for medication therapy problems, intervene when appropriate and document the interventions in the PMR as policy permits. Cases on the exam will require the same type of systematic assessment to identify risks to the patient and potential solutions to problems.

Pharmacists should develop a process for thoroughly identifying medication problems. One method is shown below (see Study Tip Gal). Ask yourself each question listed: Are there any therapeutic duplications? Are there any drug interactions? You may not be able to answer every question with the information provided. Strong mastery of the material (e.g., brand name recognition, drug interactions, guideline recommendations) is essential. The following Case Scenario illustrates how you could be asked several different types of questions about a case.

LOOKING FOR MEDICATION PROBLEMS IN A PATIENT CASE

Review the case for the following medication problems:

- Untreated medical condition
- Medications used without an indication
- Improper drug selection
- Dose that is too low or high
- Therapeutic duplication
- Lack of patient understanding
- Drug allergy
- Drug interaction
- Improper use of medication
- Failure to receive medication
- Adverse drug reaction
- Nonadherence

Practice reviewing cases until it becomes routine to check for each of these problems, every time. This is essential for a pharmacist.

CASE SCENARIO

A new patient transfers the following prescriptions to a pharmacy on December 15th: *Benicar* 20 mg daily, *Zocor* 20 mg daily, *Stribild* 1 tablet daily (last refilled November 1st) and *Avapro* 150 mg TID. All are written for a 30-day supply.

Identify the potential problems:

- Therapeutic duplication: two ARBs, irbesartan *(Avapro)* and olmesartan *(Benicar)*
- Drug interaction: cobicistat (in *Stribild)* is contraindicated with simvastatin
- Dose too high: *Avapro* should be dosed once daily
- Potential nonadherence: *Stribild* (a treatment for HIV) should be refilled every 30 days

MATCHING DRUGS TO MEDICAL PROBLEMS

How will you determine whether there are untreated medical conditions, drugs without an indication or duplications of therapy? Pharmacists are skilled at matching medical problems and drugs to assess this.

CASE SCENARIO

Match the medications to the condition being treated. Some conditions may require more than one medication.

Past Medical History	Medications
Hypertension	Cephalexin
Arthritis	*Synthroid*
Depression	Hydrochlorothiazide
Cellulitis	*Renova* cream
Diabetes	*Ambien*
	Mobic
	Cymbalta

Past Medical History	Medications
Hypertension →	Hydrochlorothiazide
Arthritis →	*Mobic*
Depression →	*Cymbalta*
Cellulitis →	Cephalexin
Diabetes	?
? Insomnia	*Ambien*
? Hypothyroidism	*Synthroid*
? Acne	*Renova* cream

- There are several medications without a documented indication in the past medical history. The pharmacist should interview the patient and/or review labs/vitals to determine if these drugs are still appropriate. It is very common for the PMR to be incomplete or incorrect, but pharmacists must ensure that medications are used properly.
- One condition (diabetes) is not being treated with a medication. Some patients are able to control type 2 diabetes with diet alone, which might be the case. A review of the labs (blood glucose, A1C) would help determine if they are meeting goals without medications.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE MEDICATION PROFILE

Use the Case Scenario below to answer questions about the medication profile.

CASE SCENARIO

The pharmacist is filling new prescriptions for a patient with the following home medication list:

Advair	Clozapine
Roflumilast	*Depakote ER*
Dutasteride	Fenofibrate
Hyzaar	*ProAir*
Tamsulosin	*Spiriva*

Based on the medication profile, which group of medical problems does this patient have?

A. Asthma, glaucoma and gout
B. Atrial fibrillation, depression and schizophrenia
C. BPH, COPD and hypertension
D. Hypertriglyceridemia, migraine and Parkinson disease
E. Seizures, diabetes and anemia

One of the new prescriptions is for *Flomax*. This is a duplication of therapy with which of the patient's current medications?

A. *Advair*
B. Dutasteride
C. *Hyzaar*
D. Roflumilast
E. Tamsulosin

The patient's labs show increased ammonia. Which of the home medications is most likely responsible?

A. *Advair*
B. Clozapine
C. *Depakote ER*
D. *Spiriva*
E. Tamsulosin

Answers: c, e, c

RECOMMENDING DRUG THERAPY

Some exam questions will ask you to make a drug therapy recommendation. This requires strong knowledge of guidelines and indications/contraindications for drugs. Read the question and answer choices first, before extensively evaluating the case. After reading the question, you should know what to look for in the case.

CASE SCENARIO

A patient has a past medical history of type 2 diabetes and is not taking any medications. Which of the following medications should be recommended to treat the patient's diabetes?

A. *Actos*
B. Dapagliflozin
C. *Glucotrol XL*
D. Sitagliptin
E. Regular insulin given via IV infusion

How will you decide which answer to pick? Here is how you should approach this question:

- Dapagliflozin is used first-line for type 2 diabetes. It is likely the correct answer. Before selecting dapagliflozin, make sure it is a safe choice in this specific patient and that nothing in the case would make another choice better:
  - ☐ Does the patient have a comorbid condition that dictates the need for a specific drug first-line (e.g., a GLP-1 agonist or SGLT2 inhibitor for ASCVD history)?
  - ☐ Could this patient have HHS or DKA, which would require an insulin infusion? Check the HPI, symptoms and labs for guidance (e.g., very high glucose, altered mental status, extreme dehydration).
  - ☐ Does the patient have any allergies? Are they pregnant?
  - ☐ Dapagliflozin *should* be started if CKD is present, but not if eGFR is < 20 mL/min/1.73 m^2. If eGFR is not provided, calculate the patient's CrCl as an estimate.

If an insulin infusion is not needed, and there are no contraindications or safety concerns with dapagliflozin, select it as the correct answer choice. If dapagliflozin is not safe, use a similar process to determine an alternative.

EXAMPLE ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORD SOAP NOTE

JB (MRN: JB747114): SOAP Note for 9/25
Date of birth: 10/24/XXXX
Allergies: NKDA

VS

Height:	Weight:	BMI	Blood Pressure	Pulse	Resp Rate	Oral Temp:
67 in	88.6 kg	30.5 kg/m^2	154/92 mmHg	80 bpm	12 rpm	36.6 °C

CC "I feel limp."

S

JB is a 40 y/o female who presents with a 3-month history of increasing fatigue. She first noticed that she felt tired when working long hours at work, but she has been working her usual 8 hours a day for the past 2 months and has not regained her energy. She describes her fatigue as "feeling limp." It is present throughout the day and is worse with significant exertion (e.g., walking > 3-4 blocks or going up stairs). She has tried sleeping up to 10 hours/night (increased from 8 hours/night), and it has not helped. She is concerned that there is something seriously wrong, as she is usually full of energy and her family and friends are starting to ask if she is sick. She has not been able to exercise, which she usually enjoys. She has gained about 2.7-3.2 kgs in the last few months, which she attributes to inactivity due to fatigue. Her husband states that she has "always" snored quite loudly. Her menses are regular on timing, with a heavy flow for 1-2 days, then a lighter flow for another 2-3 days. The pattern is unchanged from before the onset of her fatigue. Her last menstrual period was one week ago.

Denies: chest pain, shortness of breath, abdominal pain, N/V/D, changes in her stool, fever, chills, night sweats and changes in mood.

She reports a history of GERD, HTN, heart murmur and depression. She states that she takes her medications regularly "except the one for her blood pressure because she doesn't feel like her pressure is high."

Her reported medications include *Pepcid AC* 10 mg PO BID, chlorthalidone 25 mg PO daily, *Zoloft* 100 mg daily and *Caltrate + D3* 600 mg BID.

O

Well-appearing female in no acute distress.

SKIN: not pale, no rashes

NECK: no thyromegaly or thyroid nodules

NODES: no cervical, axillary or inguinal lymphadenopathy

CHEST: clear to auscultation and percussion bilaterally

CV: RRR, 2/6 systolic ejection murmur heard best at the LLSB that radiates to the apex, no S3 or S4

ABD: normal active bowel sounds, no hepatosplenomegaly by palpation or percussion, no abdominal tenderness

EXT: no edema, pulses normal

A

Recent onset of fatigue with no obvious inciting event. Hypothyroidism is possible given her weight gain, though this may have occurred from her inactivity. Anemia is possible, though her menstrual periods have not lengthened or increased, and there are no other apparent sources of blood loss. A recent menses makes pregnancy unlikely. Given her history of snoring, sleep apnea is possible, but her history of snoring over many years is not entirely consistent with her more recent onset of fatigue. She does not seem to have a recurrence of her depression since she has no new symptoms. She does not have symptoms of infection, nor has her murmur changed, so subacute bacterial endocarditis is unlikely. BP is elevated, and she has been nonadherent with prescribed therapy for HTN.

P

#1. Check TSH to rule out hypothyroidism

#2. Check CBC to rule out anemia

#3. If the above are unremarkable, consider a sleep study to rule out sleep apnea

#4. Pharmacy consult for medication adherence

#5. Follow-up visit in 1 week to discuss test results and further workup

PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

CODE OF ETHICS

The Code of Ethics for Pharmacists, published by the American Pharmacists Association (APhA), outlines the principles that guide the roles and responsibilities of a pharmacist. It is part of the professional duty of a pharmacist to respect the relationship with each patient, including:

- Respecting their autonomy and dignity
- Promoting their well-being with compassion and confidentiality
- Acting with honesty and integrity

In addition, a pharmacist must maintain professional competence, respect their colleagues and other health professionals, serve the needs of their community and society and be fair and equitable in distributing health resources.

INFORMED CONSENT

Informed consent is a process of providing information to help empower patients to make educated decisions about their healthcare or participation in research. To truly be considered informed consent, the patient must have capacity to make decisions, there must be comprehension of the information, all information must be disclosed (e.g., risks and benefits of a procedure), and the consent must be given voluntarily (i.e., without pressure). Consent should be documented in the patient medical record.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) created national standards to protect the privacy of a patient's protected health information (PHI). Healthcare facilities, insurance companies and pharmacies must ensure that patient information is kept confidential and secure. It must not be available to viewers who do not require access. These protections apply to both paper records and electronic records.

For electronic records, access is limited by using PINs and passwords, the information is encrypted and there is an "audit trail" to track access. Security can still be breached; employees can access medical records when they are not involved in the patient's care, they forget to log out or the system can be hacked. All personnel using the EHR are responsible for ensuring confidentiality and security. Education on security must be frequent, and the software must be continuously evaluated for breaches.

As part of the HIPAA requirements, patients have a right to access their own medical records kept in either paper or electronic formats. It is also permissible to share PHI with other healthcare providers caring for the patient, entities requiring the information for payment or operational purposes (e.g., care coordination), for research/public health (as a limited data set), and law enforcement (with restrictions).

PROTECTED HEALTH INFORMATION

PHI includes any individually identifiable health information that relates to:

- The patient's past, current or future physical or mental health
- The healthcare provided to the patient (e.g., laboratory tests, surgery, medications)
- The past, present or future payment for providing healthcare to the patient (e.g., hospital bills)
- Personal patient information (when associated with healthcare provided):*
  - Name, address, birth date, social security number

**If the identifying information is not related to health information, then it is not considered PHI (e.g., names, residential addresses or phone numbers listed in a public directory such as a phone book).*

MENTORING AND PRECEPTING

Experiential learning is an essential component of pharmacy education. Part of a pharmacist's professional duty is to assist in training the next generation of pharmacists (either directly or indirectly) to ensure the future of the profession. This can be accomplished by serving as a mentor and/or a preceptor.

When serving as a preceptor, the appropriate preceptor role should be utilized based on the trainee's progression of learning. The four preceptor roles include:

- Direct instruction: teaching foundational content (e.g., preceptor assigns readings for a future discussion).
- Modeling: demonstrating a skill (e.g., trainee observes preceptor counseling a patient).
- Coaching: allowing the trainee to perform a skill, with observation (e.g., preceptor directly observes a trainee counsel a patient).
- Facilitating: allowing the trainee to perform a skill independently, with the preceptor available for a debrief after the fact (e.g., trainee counsels a patient independently and debriefs with preceptor afterwards).

These roles are sequential (i.e., start with the first and work up to the fourth), though not all trainees will require starting at the same place. Progression is individualized based on the trainee's skill set and the learning experience.

GIVING AND RECEIVING FEEDBACK

Feedback is critical for the learning cycle and should be specific and criteria-based. Several models for delivering feedback are available that can help create consistency, though no single approach is considered best. Examples include the sandwich method (negative feedback is "sandwiched" between positive feedback) and Pendleton's rules (the trainee is asked for a self-evaluation of what went well and what can be improved).

Receiving constructive feedback can create feelings of anger, blame or denial. Some helpful suggestions for receiving feedback professionally include controlling your emotions and monitoring your body language, listening to the message, asking questions for clarification, suggesting or asking for potential solutions and summarizing the feedback to ensure understanding.

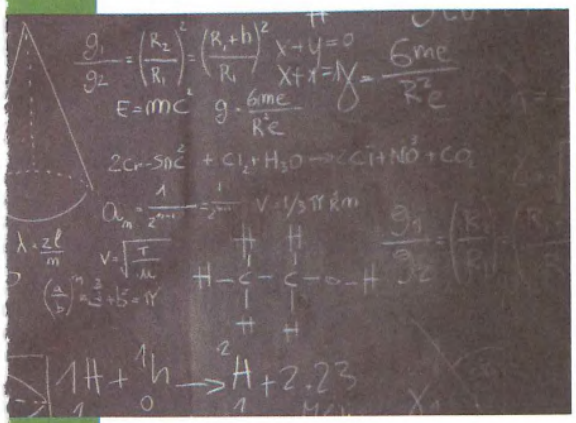
Select Guidelines/References

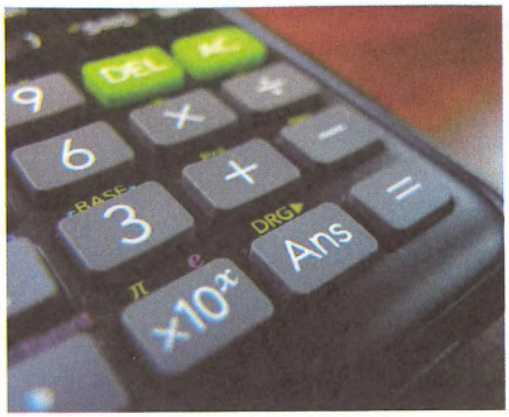
American Society of Health-System Pharmacists. ASHP Guidelines on Pharmacist-Conducted Patient Education and Counseling. *Am J Health-Syst Pharm.* 1997;54(4):431-4.

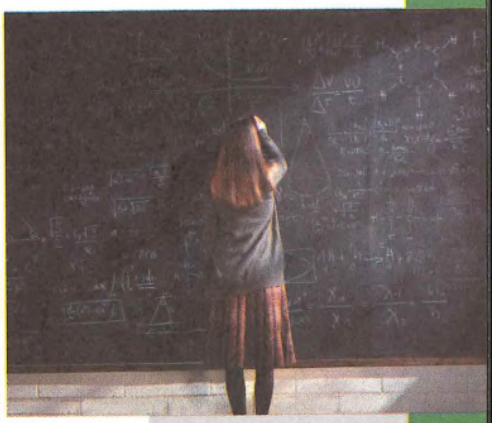
American Pharmacists Association. Code of Ethics for Pharmacists. https://www.pharmacist.com/code-of-ethics (adopted 1994 Oct 27; accessed 2025 Feb 19).

Healthy People 2030, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. https://odphp.health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/social-determinants-health (accessed 2025 Feb 19).

CALCULATIONS







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CHAPTER 9

CALCULATIONS I: MATH BASICS

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> This chapter covers basic math concepts that must be mastered for NAPLEX. These topics may be a review for some, but they are the foundation for solving more complex problems in later chapters.

= Study Tip Gal = Key Drugs Guy

STUDYING CALCULATIONS

NAPLEX Domain 1 "Foundational Knowledge for Pharmacy Practice" (which includes pharmaceutical calculations) makes up 25% of the exam. Expect to encounter multi-step, "fill in the blank" math problems and patient cases that require calculations in order to determine the appropriateness of therapy. You should anticipate 20-30 calculation questions on your exam (maybe more). Because math mistakes can lead to serious patient harm, mastery of pharmaceutical calculations is highly recommended.

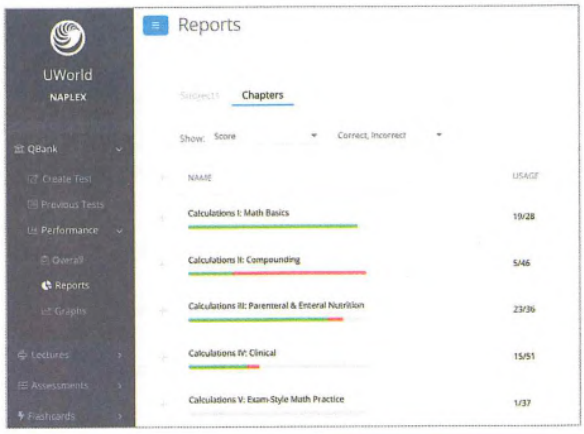
The best approach is to study math early, practice it often and mix up the content from the Calculations chapters in the QBank. For example, if you are finished studying the Calculations I, II and III chapters, create tests for yourself in the QBank that include all three chapters. It is also beneficial to mix math with clinical topics in the QBank. When you get close to your exam, you should be able to create mixed tests from any chapters in the QBank and perform well.

ASSESSING READINESS FOR MATH

You are ready for calculations on the NAPLEX when:

- ✔ All of the math concepts in this course book have been mastered.
- ✔ All formulas on the Required Formulas Sheet have been memorized and can be quickly recalled in response to a problem.
- ✔ Each calculations QBank (including biostatistics and pharmacokinetics) has been reviewed multiple times and math mistakes have been remediated.
- ✔ Each math problem can be completed in ~1.6 minutes (1 minute and 36 seconds). This is the average pace required to complete all questions on the NAPLEX in 6 hours.

Track and monitor your progress on Calculations with the Reports tab in the QBank.



EQUIVALENT MEASUREMENTS

Drugs can be measured in different ways:

- Weight [e.g., grams (g), milligrams (mg), micrograms (mcg), nanograms (ng)]
- Volume [e.g., liters (L), milliliters (mL)]
- Concentration [i.e., amount of drug in a given volume of diluent (e.g., mcg/mL, mg/dL, mEq/L), which includes percentage strength (g in 100 mL, g in 100 g or mL in 100 mL), ratio strength and parts per million (see Calculations II chapter)].

Common conversions must be known by pharmacists (see Study Tip Gal on the next page); they may or may not be provided on the exam. Actual or approximate conversions can be used for calculations on the exam; both will result in the same answer when rounding instructions provided in the question are followed. If a specific conversion is provided in the question, always use it (see problem #2).

1. A prescription reads: "take 2 tsp PO Q6H × 7 days." How many milliliters must be dispensed to complete 7 days of therapy?

$$2\ \text{tsp} \times \frac{5\ \text{mL}}{1\ \text{tsp}} = 10\ \text{mL per dose}$$

$$\frac{10\ \text{mL}}{\text{dose}} \times \frac{4\ \text{doses}}{\text{day}} \times 7\ \text{days} = 280\ \text{mL}$$

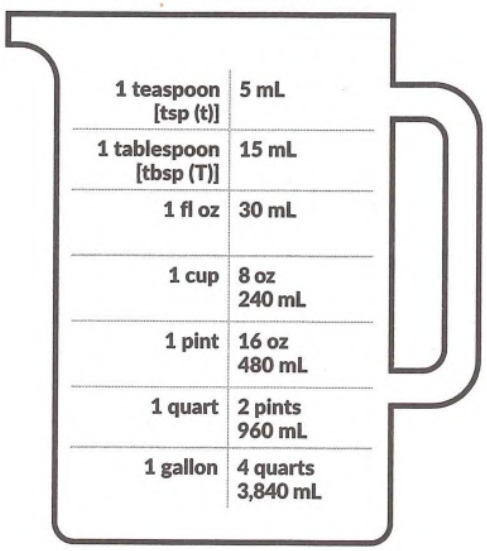
2. If 1 ounce = 30 mL, how many milliliters of sterile water will remain after 50 mL are used from a 16 ounce bottle?

$$16\ \text{oz} \times \frac{30\ \text{mL}}{1\ \text{oz}} = 480\ \text{mL bottle of sterile water}$$

480 mL - 50 mL = 430 mL of sterile water will remain

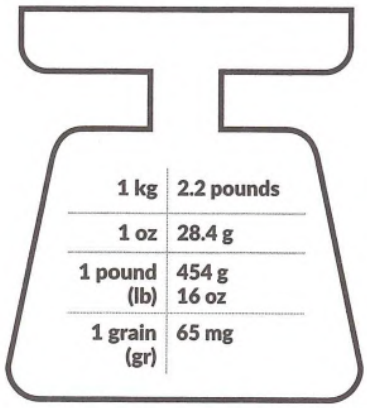
APPROXIMATE COMMON CONVERSIONS

LIQUID (VOLUME) CONVERSIONS



1 teaspoon [tsp (t)]	5 mL
1 tablespoon [tbsp (T)]	15 mL
1 fl oz	30 mL
1 cup	8 oz 240 mL
1 pint	16 oz 480 mL
1 quart	2 pints 960 mL
1 gallon	4 quarts 3,840 mL

SOLID (WEIGHT) CONVERSIONS



1 kg	2.2 pounds
1 oz	28.4 g
1 pound (lb)	454 g 16 oz
1 grain (gr)	65 mg

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MILLIEQUIVALENTS (mEq) & MILLIMOLES (mmol)

K^+, Na^+ & other monovalent ions	1 mEq = 1 mmol*
Ca^{++} & other divalent ions	1 mEq = 0.5 mmol*

** If mEq are provided for potassium, and the answer requires mmol, use the same numbers. When mEq are provided for calcium, and the answer requires mmol, use half of the number.*

HEIGHT CONVERSIONS

Inch (in)	2.54 centimeters (cm)
Meter (m)	100 cm

ROUNDING

Rounding final answers correctly is very important on the NAPLEX (see Study Tip Gal).

HOW TO ROUND ON THE EXAM

- Underline the number to the right of what is being rounded. If rounding to the nearest whole number, underline the 4 in this example: 347.48
- Look at the number that is underlined and apply one of these rules:
  - If the underlined number is 5, 6, 7, 8, or 9, round up.
  - If the underlined number is 0, 1, 2, 3, or 4, round down.
- 347.48 rounded to the nearest whole number is 347.
  - **Round only once on the last step in the calculation.***

These standard rounding rules do not apply to certain Biostatistics calculations (e.g., number needed to treat or harm) and instances when a pharmacist cannot dispense a partial vial or syringe. This will be clear in the phrasing of the question.

**Use the calculator's memory or parentheses function on the exam for the intermediate steps. In the UWorld RxPrep course book, some intermediate steps (that do not affect the final answer) have been rounded for simplicity and space.*

3. A pediatric patient is receiving 5.25 mL of drug every 4 hours. How many milliliters will be required for the entire day? Round to the nearest whole number.

5.25 mL (per dose) x 6 times/day = 31.5 mL
Round to the nearest whole number = 32 mL

4. A patient requires 410.9 mg of a drug daily. The daily dose will be divided for BID administration. How many milligrams will the patient receive BID? Round to the nearest whole number.

410.9 mg daily/2 times per day = 205.45 mg BID
Round to the nearest whole number = 205 mg BID

What if the problem said "round to the nearest tenth?" The correct answer would then be 205.5 mg. Rounding to the nearest tenth is the same as rounding to one decimal place.

5. Enoxaparin 56.5 mg was ordered for a patient. The hospital rounds enoxaparin doses to the nearest 10 mg. What dose should be dispensed?

Correct answer: 60 mg. Rounding to the nearest 10 mg is different than rounding to the nearest tenth.

6. A patient is 5'2" tall. What is her height in centimeters? Round to the nearest whole number.

$$5 \text{ feet} \times \frac{12 \text{ inches}}{1 \text{ foot}} = 60 \text{ inches} + 2 \text{ inches} = 62 \text{ inches}$$

$$62 \text{ inches} \times \frac{2.54 \text{ cm}}{1 \text{ inch}} = 157.48 \text{ cm}$$

Round to the nearest whole number = 157 cm

Watch for products that cannot be split. You cannot dispense a partial insulin vial or pen to a patient, so rounding to the nearest vial or pen would be required, as illustrated in the Case Scenario below.

CASE SCENARIO

A patient takes *Novolog* 16 units TID before meals. How many vials of *Novolog* are needed for a 30-day supply?

Answer: The patient takes 48 units per day or 1,440 units per month. Since each vial of *Novolog* contains 1,000 units, the patient requires two vials for a 30-day supply.

PROPORTIONS AND DIMENSIONAL ANALYSIS

These methods are very important for the math that pharmacists do routinely. Dimensional analysis, individual proportion calculations, or a combination of the two are acceptable. When performed correctly, both methods provide the same answer.

PROPORTIONS

Proportions are two fractions (ratios) that are set equal to each other. One variable is unknown and labeled "X." When setting up proportions, make sure that the units for the numerators match to each other and the units for the denominators match to each other or make sure the items in the left fraction match and the items in the right fraction match (see Study Tip Gal and problem #7 for an example).

DIMENSIONAL ANALYSIS

Dimensional analysis allows multiple proportion calculations to be completed quickly. Diagonal units that are the same can be crossed out ("canceled out"), leaving the desired units. The numbers can be plugged into the calculator exactly as written.

SETTING UP PROPORTIONS

Two methods of matching:

Match both numerators and both denominators: Every item in the left numerator (drug, route, units) must match to every item in the right numerator (except the values of the numbers).

Every item in the left denominator must match to every item in the right denominator (except the values of the numbers).

Match numerator and denominator of each fraction: Items in the left fraction (numerator and denominator) must match, and items in the right fraction (numerator and denominator) must match (except the value of the numbers).

Carefully review problem #7 to see how both methods provide the same answer.

7. A patient weighs 176 pounds. What is the patient's weight in kilograms?

Method 1: Proportion. Solve for X by multiplying diagonally and then dividing. Set up in either of the two ways shown.

$$\frac{176 \text{ lbs}}{X \text{ kg}} = \frac{2.2 \text{ lbs}}{1 \text{ kg}} \qquad X = 80 \text{ kg}$$

or

$$\frac{176 \text{ lbs}}{2.2 \text{ lbs}} = \frac{X \text{ kg}}{1 \text{ kg}} \qquad X = 80 \text{ kg}$$

Method 2: Dimensional analysis. Cancel out the same units diagonally, leaving the desired units.

$$176 \cancel{\text{lbs}} \times \frac{1 \text{ kg}}{2.2 \cancel{\text{lbs}}} = 80 \text{ kg}$$

Notice that there is an equal sign (=) between the fractions in a proportion and a multiplication symbol (×) between the fractions in dimensional analysis.

CONVERTING COMMON UNITS

LARGER → SMALLER VOLUME

Liters (L) → milliliters (mL)

8. How many milliliters are in 5 liters?

Method 1: Proportion

$$\frac{5\ \text{L}}{X\ \text{mL}} = \frac{1\ \text{L}}{1{,}000\ \text{mL}} \quad X = 5{,}000\ \text{mL}$$

or

Method 2: Dimensional analysis

$$5\ \text{L} \times \frac{1{,}000\ \text{mL}}{1\ \text{L}} = 5{,}000\ \text{mL}$$

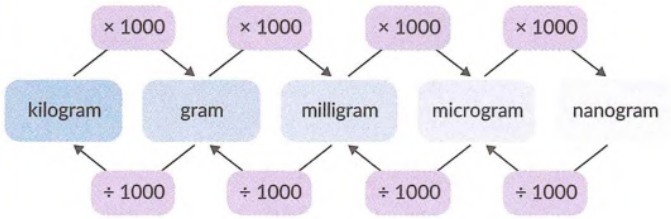
SMALLER → LARGER VOLUME

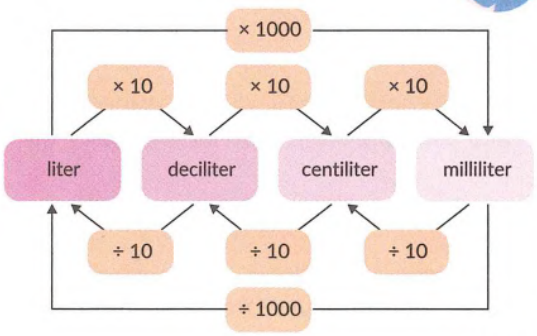
Milliliters (mL) → deciliters (dL)

9. How many deciliters are equal to 200 milliliters?

$$200\ \text{mL} \times \frac{1\ \text{dL}}{100\ \text{mL}} = 2\ \text{dL}$$

METRIC CONVERSIONS





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LARGER → SMALLER WEIGHT

Kilograms (kg) → grams (g) → milligrams (mg) → micrograms (mcg) → nanograms (ng)

10. How many nanograms are equal to 5 kg?

This example requires 4 separate proportions or dimensional analysis (shown).

$$5\ \text{kg} \times \frac{1{,}000\ \text{g}}{1\ \text{kg}} \times \frac{1{,}000\ \text{mg}}{1\ \text{g}} \times \frac{1{,}000\ \text{mcg}}{1\ \text{mg}} \times \frac{1{,}000\ \text{ng}}{1\ \text{mcg}} = 5\ \text{trillion ng (or } 5 \times 10^{12}\ \text{ng)}$$

SMALLER → LARGER WEIGHT

Nanograms (ng) → micrograms (mcg) → milligrams (mg) → grams (g) → kilograms (kg)

11. How many grams are equal to 50,000,000 nanograms?

$$50{,}000{,}000\ \text{ng} \times \frac{1\ \text{mcg}}{1{,}000\ \text{ng}} \times \frac{1\ \text{mg}}{1{,}000\ \text{mcg}} \times \frac{1\ \text{g}}{1{,}000\ \text{mg}} = 0.05\ \text{g}$$

When dimensional analysis is presented from this point forward, the strike through lines will be omitted for readability.

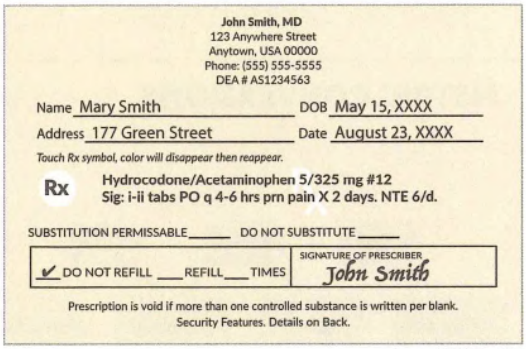
CALCULATIONS INVOLVING PRESCRIPTIONS

Interpretation of prescriptions (including common prescription abbreviations), orders and compounding instructions will be necessary on the exam.

12. A pharmacist receives this prescription for hydrocodone/acetaminophen. How many tablets should be dispensed?

A. 6 tablets
B. 8 tablets
C. 12 tablets
D. 16 tablets
E. 24 tablets

The correct answer is (C). The dispense quantity is indicated and consistent with the "not to exceed" instructions.



John Smith, MD
123 Anywhere Street
Anytown, USA 00000
Phone: (555) 555-5555
DEA # AS1234563

Name Mary Smith DOB May 15, XXXX
Address 177 Green Street Date August 23, XXXX
Touch Rx symbol, color will disappear then reappear.

Rx Hydrocodone/Acetaminophen 5/325 mg #12
Sig: i-ii tabs PO q 4-6 hrs prn pain X 2 days. NTE 6/d.

SUBSTITUTION PERMISSABLE_____ DO NOT SUBSTITUTE_____

✓ DO NOT REFILL ___ REFILL___ TIMES | SIGNATURE OF PRESCRIBER John Smith

Prescription is void if more than one controlled substance is written per blank.
Security Features. Details on Back.

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13. How many milliliters of magnesium hydroxide suspension are contained in each dose of the prescription below? Round to the nearest whole number.

PRESCRIPTION	QUANTITY
Belladonna Tincture	10 mL
Phenobarbital	60 mL
Magnesium hydroxide q.s. ad	120 mL
Sig. 5 mL BID	

The abbreviation "q.s. ad" means "a sufficient quantity to make," so the total volume of the compound will be 120 mL; 10 mL of belladonna, 60 mL of phenobarbital, and 50 mL of magnesium hydroxide suspension.

$$\frac{50\ \text{mL magnesium hydroxide}}{120\ \text{mL total Rx}} = \frac{X\ \text{mL magnesium hydroxide}}{5\ \text{mL total Rx dose}}$$

X = 2.08, or 2 mL magnesium hydroxide per dose

14. A pharmacist receives a prescription for "Moxifloxacin ophthalmic 0.5%. Dispense 3 mL. 1 gtt tid ou × 7d." How many drops will the patient use per day?

A. 1 drop
B. 2 drops
C. 3 drops
D. 6 drops
E. 21 drops

The correct answer is (D). Abbreviations used on prescriptions must be known. In this case, "gtt" refers to "drop" and "ou" refers to "each eye." The instructions read "Instill 1 drop in each eye three times per day." Refer to the Common Conditions of the Eyes & Ears chapter for additional abbreviations.

15. A 7-year-old male child (48 pounds) presents to the urgent care clinic with a fever of 102°F, and nausea/vomiting that started the previous day. He will receive an acetaminophen 5 grain suppository for the fever. A pharmacist receives a prescription for the suppository with the instructions: Use 1 PR Q4-6H PRN temperature > 102°F. How many milligrams per kilogram (mg/kg) will the child receive per dose? Round to the nearest whole number.

$$5 \text{ grains} \times \frac{65 \text{ mg}}{1 \text{ grain}} = 325 \text{ mg per suppository}$$

$$48 \text{ lbs} \times \frac{1 \text{ kg}}{2.2 \text{ lbs}} = \sim 21.8182 \text{ kg}$$

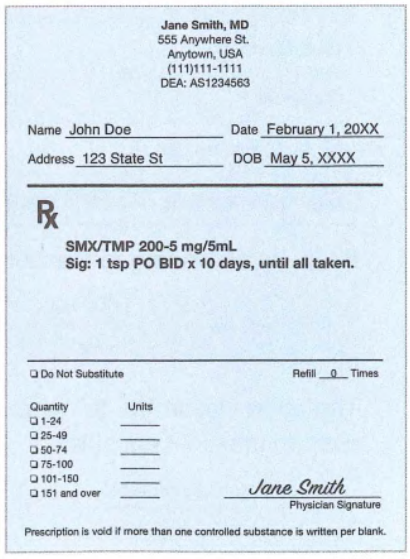
Note: if a proportion is used to solve the weight conversion step above, the repeating decimals must be addressed. It is best to use the calculator's memory or parentheses function on the exam so that all decimals can be carried forward to the next step. Round only once on the last step.

325 mg/21.8182 kg = ~14.896 mg/kg, round to 15 mg/kg

Some pharmacists may have learned the "actual" milligram to grain conversion of 64.8 mg per grain vs the approximate conversion of 65 mg per grain. Both conversions provide the same answer when rounded to the nearest whole number.

16. A pharmacist received this sulfamethoxazole/trimethoprim prescription and dispensed 3 oz to the patient. How many days of therapy will the patient be short? Use 30 mL for 1 fluid ounce.

A. 1
B. 3
C. 9
D. 10
E. 90


Jane Smith, MD
555 Anywhere St.
Anytown, USA
(111)111-1111
DEA: AS1234563

Name John Doe Date February 1, 20XX
Address 123 State St DOB May 5, XXXX

℞
SMX/TMP 200-5 mg/5mL
Sig: 1 tsp PO BID x 10 days, until all taken.

❑ Do Not Substitute Refill 0 Times

Quantity Units
❑ 1-24 ____
❑ 25-49 ____
❑ 50-74 ____
❑ 75-100 ____
❑ 101-150 ____
❑ 151 and over ____

Jane Smith
Physician Signature

Prescription is void if more than one controlled substance is written per blank.

©UWorld

The correct answer is (A).

5 mL (per dose) x 2 times/day x 10 days = 100 mL

Quantity dispensed: 3 oz x 30 mL/oz = 90 mL dispensed

Difference: 100 mL - 90 mL = 10 mL, which is 1 day of therapy

A common mistake is selecting answer (D). The patient will be 10 mL short, but the question asked for "days of therapy." Each tsp (t) is 5 mL. The patient must take 2 tsp (t) daily (or 10 mL), so will be one day short for his prescribed course of therapy.

17. A pharmacist has tablets that contain 0.25 mg of levothyroxine per tablet. The tablets will be crushed and mixed with glycerol and water to prepare a prescription for a child weighing 36 pounds. How many levothyroxine tablets will be needed to compound the following prescription?

PRESCRIPTION	QUANTITY
Levothyroxine Liq.	0.1 mg/mL
Disp.	60 mL
Sig. 0.01 mg per kg PO BID	

$$60 \text{ mL total Rx} \times \frac{0.1 \text{ mg levo}}{\text{mL}} = 6 \text{ mg of levothyroxine needed}$$

$$6 \text{ mg levo} \times \frac{1 \text{ tab}}{0.25 \text{ mg levo}} = 24 \text{ tabs of levothyroxine needed}$$

The first step can also be performed as a proportion. If set up correctly, the answers will be the same.

$$\frac{0.1 \text{ mg levo}}{1 \text{ mL}} = \frac{X \text{ mg levo}}{60 \text{ mL}} \quad X = 6 \text{ mg of levothyroxine needed}$$

$$6 \text{ mg levo} \times \frac{1 \text{ tab}}{0.25 \text{ mg levo}} = 24 \text{ tabs of levothyroxine needed}$$

Or, it can be solved by dimensional analysis. Notice that the child's weight is not needed to solve the problem.

$$\frac{1 \text{ tab levo}}{0.25 \text{ mg levo}} \times \frac{0.1 \text{ mg levo}}{\text{mL}} \times 60 \text{ mL total Rx} = 24 \text{ tabs of levothyroxine needed}$$

18. How many milligrams of codeine will be contained in each capsule?

PRESCRIPTION	QUANTITY
Codeine Sulfate	0.6 g
Guaifenesin	1.2 g
Caffeine	0.15 g
M. ft. caps. no. 24	
Sig. One capsule TID PRN cough	

Begin by converting to the units requested in the answer (mg).

$$0.6 \text{ g codeine} \times \frac{1{,}000 \text{ mg}}{1 \text{ g}} = 600 \text{ mg of codeine for the total prescription}$$

The abbreviation "M. ft." means "mix and make." In this case, all of the ingredients will be combined and used to make 24 capsules.

$$\frac{600 \text{ mg codeine total}}{24 \text{ caps}} = 25 \text{ mg of codeine/capsule}$$

After solving the problem, read the question again to be certain the question was answered with the correct units (mg of codeine per capsule).

19. How many grains of aspirin will be contained in each capsule? Round to the nearest tenth.

PRESCRIPTION	QUANTITY
Aspirin	6 g
Phenacetin	3.2 g
Caffeine	0.48 g
M. ft. no. 20 caps	
Sig. One capsule Q6H PRN pain	

$$6\text{ g aspirin} \times \frac{1{,}000\text{ mg}}{1\text{ g}} \times \frac{1\text{ grain}}{65\text{ mg}} = 92.3\text{ grains}$$

We have 92.3 grains of aspirin that will be divided into 20 capsules.

$$\frac{92.3\text{ grains}}{20\text{ capsules}} = 4.6\text{ grains/capsule}$$

After solving the problem, read the question again to be certain the question was answered with the correct units (grains per capsule).

20. A 45 milliliter nasal spray delivers 20 sprays per milliliter of solution. Each spray contains 1.5 mg of active drug. How many milligrams of drug are contained in the 45 mL package?

First, calculate the amount of drug per mL.

$$\frac{1.5\text{ mg drug}}{\text{spray}} \times \frac{20\text{ sprays}}{\text{mL}} = 30\text{ mg/mL}$$

Then, solve for milligrams of drug in 45 mL.

$$\frac{30\text{ mg}}{\text{mL}} = \frac{X\text{ mg}}{45\text{ mL}} \qquad X = 1{,}350\text{ mg}$$

21. A metered-dose inhaler provides 90 micrograms of albuterol sulfate with each inhalation. The canister provides 200 inhalations. If the patient uses the entire canister, how many total milligrams will the patient have received?

$$200\text{ inhalations} \times \frac{90\text{ mcg}}{\text{inhalation}} \times \frac{1\text{ mg}}{1{,}000\text{ mcg}} = 18\text{ mg}$$

22. Digoxin injection is supplied in ampules of 500 mcg per 2 mL. How many milliliters must a nurse administer to provide a dose of 0.2 mg?

Method 1: Two steps using a proportion.

First, convert micrograms to milligrams.

$$500 \text{ mcg} \times \frac{1 \text{ mg}}{1{,}000 \text{ mcg}} = 0.5 \text{ mg}$$

Then, use a proportion to calculate the number of milliliters for a 0.2 mg dose.

$$\frac{0.5 \text{ mg digoxin}}{2 \text{ mL}} = \frac{0.2 \text{ mg digoxin}}{X \text{ mL}} \qquad X = 0.8 \text{ mL}$$

Method 2: Dimensional analysis.

$$0.2 \text{ mg} \times \frac{1{,}000 \text{ mcg}}{1 \text{ mg}} \times \frac{2 \text{ mL}}{500 \text{ mcg}} = 0.8 \text{ mL}$$

23. If one 10 mL vial contains 0.05 g of diltiazem, how many milliliters should be administered to provide a 25 mg dose of diltiazem?

Method 1: Two steps using a proportion.

First, convert grams to milligrams. It is usually best practice to convert to the units required for the answer when beginning the problem.

$$0.05 \text{ g diltiazem} \times \frac{1{,}000 \text{ mg}}{1 \text{ g}} = 50 \text{ mg}$$

Next, calculate the number of milliliters for a 25 mg dose.

$$\frac{50 \text{ mg}}{10 \text{ mL}} = \frac{25 \text{ mg}}{X \text{ mL}} \qquad X = 5 \text{ mL}$$

Method 2: Dimensional analysis.

$$25 \text{ mg dose} \times \frac{1 \text{ g}}{1{,}000 \text{ mg}} \times \frac{10 \text{ mL}}{0.05 \text{ g}} = 5 \text{ mL}$$

CONVERTING FROM ONE DRUG TO ANOTHER

Another common application for proportions is converting from one drug and dose to another drug and dose. Common conversions that pharmacists perform are shown (see Key Drugs Guy). These common drug-dose conversions can also be found on the UWorld RxPrep Required Formulas Sheet.

DRUG-DOSE CONVERSIONS

These drug-dose conversions must be known for the exam. The conversions are discussed in the disease state chapters noted.

- Aminophylline/theophylline (Asthma)
- Calcium salts (Osteoporosis, Menopause & Testosterone Use, Calculations IV)
- Insulin (Diabetes)
- Iron salts (Anemia)
- Lithium salts (Bipolar Disorder, Calculations II)
- Loop diuretics (Chronic Heart Failure)
- Opioids (Pain)
- Potassium chloride (Chronic Heart Failure, Calculations II)
- Statins (Dyslipidemia)
- Steroids (Systemic Steroids & Autoimmune Conditions)
- IV:PO conversions
  - Furosemide (Chronic Heart Failure)
  - Levothyroxine (Thyroid Disorders)
  - Metoprolol (Chronic Heart Failure)

---

24. The pharmacist is consulted to convert a patient from prednisone 10 mg PO BID to an equivalent dose of oral dexamethasone given once daily. What is the equivalent daily dose? Prednisone 5 mg = dexamethasone 0.75 mg.

$$\frac{\text{20 mg prednisone}}{\text{X mg dexamethasone}} = \frac{\text{5 mg prednisone}}{\text{0.75 mg dexamethasone}} \quad \text{X = 3 mg of dexamethasone daily}$$

Notice that the numerators match each other (drug name and units) and the denominators match each other. For the exam, the equivalencies (e.g., prednisone 5 mg = dexamethasone 0.75 mg) must be memorized (see the Systemic Steroids & Autoimmune Conditions chapter for steroid equivalencies).

RATIOS

A ratio is a comparison between two numbers, and can be used to describe how ingredients should be mixed. If compounding instructions state "mix petrolatum and lanolin in a 3:1 ratio," it means 3 parts of petrolatum should be mixed with 1 part of lanolin. The pharmacist needs to know the weight of one part in order to calculate the weight of the other or the weight of the final mixture. The ratio is usually converted to a fraction (e.g., 3:1 = 3/1) for use in math.

---

25. How many grams of bacitracin and nystatin are required to prepare 150 g of a 2:3 topical bacitracin:nystatin ointment?

Since the total weight is provided (150 g) and the total number of parts can be calculated (2 parts + 3 parts = 5 total parts), the value of 1 part can be determined using a proportion.

$$\frac{\text{5 total parts}}{\text{150 g}} = \frac{\text{1 part}}{\text{X g}} \quad \text{X = 30 g per 1 part}$$

$$\text{2 parts bacitracin} \times \frac{\text{30 grams}}{\text{1 part}} = \text{60 g bacitracin}$$

$$\text{3 parts nystatin} \times \frac{\text{30 grams}}{\text{1 part}} = \text{90 g nystatin}$$

Add the weights to confirm that they match the total weight:

$$\text{60 g bacitracin + 90 g nystatin} = \text{150 g of 2:3 bacitracin:nystatin ointment}$$

RATIO RELATIONSHIPS

$$4{:}8 = \frac{4}{8} = \frac{1}{2}$$ Or, 1 part to 2 parts

DECIMALS AND PERCENTAGE CONVERSION

To convert a decimal to a percentage, multiply the decimal by 100.

To convert a percentage to a decimal, divide the percentage by 100.

26. HT is a 16-year-old female who complains of weakness, fatigue and heavy menstrual periods. She is diagnosed with anemia. HT takes ferrous sulfate 220 mg once daily. How many milligrams of elemental iron does HT receive from the supplement? Ferrous sulfate is 20% elemental iron.

Divide the percentage by 100:

20%/100 = 0.2

Multiply the total amount of ferrous sulfate by 0.2 to determine the amount of elemental iron in mg:

220 mg x 0.2 = 44 mg elemental iron

SQUARING A NUMBER

27. Calculate 3.5^2.

Either method will provide the answer:

Method 1: Multiply the number by itself:

3.5 x 3.5 = 12.25

Method 2: Use the x^2 key on the calculator:

1. Enter the number to square on the calculator: 3.5
2. Hit the x^2 key
3. This will provide the same answer: 12.25

EXPONENTS

28. Calculate 2^4.

1. Enter the first number on the calculator (in this example, enter 2)
2. Hit the x^y key
3. Enter the exponent (in this example, enter 4)
4. This will provide the answer; in this example, the answer is 16

ORDER OF OPERATIONS

Math calculations that involve more than one function need to be completed in a specified order (see Study Tip Gal). The order is brackets (first), then parentheses, then exponents, then multiplication and division (left to right), then addition and subtraction (left to right). In fractions, the fraction bar is a grouping symbol; the entire numerator and the entire denominator are calculated before dividing the denominator into the numerator.

FOLLOW THE RULES OF MATH

Brackets → Parentheses (and other grouping symbols) →
Exponents → Multiplication and Division → Addition and Subtraction

Remember: **B-PEMDAS**

Billy, **P**lease **E**at **M**om's **D**elicious **A**pple **S**trudel

Phenytoin requires a specific formula to calculate a corrected drug level when albumin is low (< 3.5 g/dL). Refer to the Seizures/Epilepsy chapter for additional discussion. The order of operations must be followed in order to get the correct result.

29. SJ is a female patient in the internal medicine unit receiving treatment following a motor vehicle accident. Her medications include lorazepam, morphine and phenytoin. Her serum albumin is 1.8 g/dL and her phenytoin level is 9.6 mcg/mL. Her CrCl is 61 mL/min. Calculate SJ's corrected phenytoin level (in mcg/mL) using the formula provided. Round to the nearest one decimal place.

$$\text{Phenytoin corrected (mcg/mL)} = \frac{\text{Total phenytoin measured}}{(0.2 \times \text{albumin}) + 0.1}\ ^{\dagger}$$

† Use serum phenytoin in mcg/mL (same as mg/L) and albumin in g/dL (standard units in the U.S.) in the corrected phenytoin formula. The units are not intended to cancel out.

$$\text{Phenytoin corrected} = \frac{9.6}{(0.2 \times 1.8) + 0.1} = \begin{array}{l}\sim 20.8696 \text{ mcg/mL} \\ \text{Round to the nearest one decimal place} = 20.9 \text{ mcg/mL}\end{array}$$

1. Do the math inside parentheses first: 0.2 × 1.8 = 0.36
2. Add 0.1 to the answer: 0.36 + 0.1 = 0.46
3. Divide 9.6 by the answer: 9.6 divided by 0.46 = 20.9 (per rounding instructions provided)

READY TO SUBMIT YOUR ANSWER?

Not so fast. Do a double check first!

Ask yourself these questions to avoid common mistakes:

- Does the answer match the question?
  - Re-read the question. Did you solve for the right thing? Remember, most problems on the exam require more than one step.
- Is the answer in the correct units? This is a common mistake. The math may be correct, but one more step is required to convert the answer to the specified units.
- Is the answer rounded correctly? The rounding instructions must be followed to get the problems right on the exam.
- Does the answer make sense?
  - If the problem asks how many liters of fluid a patient will receive in one day, 20,000 liters is unlikely to be the right answer. It does not make sense.

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CALCULATIONS

CHAPTER 10

CALCULATIONS II: COMPOUNDING

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= Study Tip Gal

PERCENTAGE STRENGTH

Drug concentrations can be expressed in many ways, but they are a ratio of the amount of an ingredient to the total amount of the product. A percent is the number of parts in 100. Percents are often written as decimals or fractions (e.g., 25% = 0.25 = 25/100). The types of percentage concentrations are defined as follows:

- Percent weight-in-volume (% w/v) is expressed as g/100 mL (a solid mixed into a liquid). This applies to common IV fluids (see Study Tip Gal).
- Percent volume-in-volume (% v/v) is expressed as mL/100 mL (a liquid mixed into a liquid).
- Percent weight-in-weight (% w/w) is expressed as g/100 g (a solid mixed into a solid).

COMMON IV FLUIDS

- Normal saline (NS) = 0.9% (w/v) NaCl in water
  - 1/2NS (called "half-normal saline") = 0.45% (w/v) NaCl in water
  - 1/4NS (called "quarter-normal saline") = 0.225% (w/v) NaCl in water
- D5W (called "D-5-W") = 5% (w/v) dextrose in water
- D20W = 20% (w/v) dextrose in water
- Combination fluid examples
  - D5NS (called "D-5-N-S") = 5% dextrose and 0.9% NaCl in water
  - D51/2NS (called "D-5-Half-N-S") = 5% dextrose and 0.45% NaCl in water

1. How many grams of NaCl are in 1 liter of normal saline (NS)?

Normal saline contains 0.9 g NaCl per 100 mL of solution (see Study Tip Gal). Percentage strength problems are solved with simple proportions (reviewed in detail in Calculations I).

$$\frac{0.9\ g}{100\ mL} = \frac{X\ g}{1{,}000\ mL} \qquad X = 9\ g$$

2. How many grams of NaCl are in 500 mL of 1/2NS? Round to the nearest hundredth.

Since NS is 0.9% NaCl, 1/2NS is 0.45%.

$$\frac{0.45\ g}{100\ mL} = \frac{X\ g}{500\ mL} \qquad X = 2.25\ g$$

3. How many grams of dextrose are in 250 mL of D5W? Round to the nearest tenth.

$$\frac{5\ g}{100\ mL} = \frac{X\ g}{250\ mL} \qquad X = 12.5\ g$$

4. How many milligrams of triamcinolone should be used in preparing the following prescription? Round to the nearest whole number.

PRESCRIPTION	QUANTITY
Triamcinolone (w/v)	5%
Glycerin qs	60 mL
Sig. Two drops in right ear once daily	

$$\frac{5\ g}{100\ mL} = \frac{X\ g}{60\ mL} \qquad X = 3\ g, \text{ or } 3{,}000\ mg$$

5. **A prescription reads as follows: "Prepare a 3% w/w coal tar preparation; qs with petrolatum to 150 grams." How many grams of petrolatum are required to compound the prescription? Round to the nearest tenth.**

$$\frac{3 \text{ g coal tar}}{100 \text{ g preparation}} = \frac{X \text{ g coal tar}}{150 \text{ g preparation}} \quad X = 4.5 \text{ g coal tar}$$

150 g (total weight of preparation) - 4.5 g (coal tar) = 145.5 g petrolatum

6. **A pharmacist is compounding a vancomycin oral suspension. The master formulation record says to reconstitute a 5 g vial of vancomycin powder for injection with 50 mL of sterile water, then dilute with sterile water to 200 mL. What is the final percentage strength of the compounded product (w/v)?**

$$\frac{5 \text{ g}}{200 \text{ mL}} = \frac{X \text{ g}}{100 \text{ mL}} \quad X = 2.5 \text{ g, which is } 2.5\%$$

7. **If 1,250 grams of a mixture contains 80 grams of a drug, what is the percentage strength (w/w) of the mixture? Round to the nearest tenth.**

$$\frac{80 \text{ g}}{1{,}250 \text{ g}} = \frac{X \text{ g}}{100 \text{ g}} \quad X = 6.4 \text{ g, which is } 6.4\%$$

8. **A mouth rinse contains 1/12% (w/v) of chlorhexidine gluconate. How many grams of chlorhexidine gluconate should be used to prepare 18 liters of mouth rinse? Round to the nearest whole number.**

First, convert 1/12% to a decimal. 1/12% = 0.083 g per 100 mL (w/v).

Next, convert L to mL. 18 L x 1,000 mL/L = 18,000 mL.

Then, solve for grams of chlorhexidine gluconate needed.

$$\frac{0.083 \text{ g}}{100 \text{ mL}} = \frac{X \text{ g}}{18{,}000 \text{ mL}} \quad X = 14.94 \text{ g, rounded to } 15 \text{ g}$$

9. SS is a 79-year-old female with dry mouth and dry eyes from Sjögren's syndrome. She is picking up the prescription below. What is the maximum milligrams of pilocarpine she will receive per day?

PRESCRIPTION	QUANTITY
Pilocarpine	1% (w/v)
Sodium chloride qs ad	15 mL
Sig: 2 gtts (0.05 mL/gtt) po TID prn up to 5 days for dry mouth	

First, calculate the amount of pilocarpine in the prescription.

$$\frac{1\text{ g}}{100\text{ mL}} = \frac{X\text{ g}}{15\text{ mL}} \quad X = 0.15\text{ g}$$

Then, convert to mg since the problem asks for mg of pilocarpine.

$$0.15\text{ g} \times \frac{1{,}000\text{ mg}}{1\text{ g}} = 150\text{ mg of pilocarpine}$$

The patient will receive up to 3 doses per day (0.1 mL x 3 = 0.3 mL). Calculate the amount of pilocarpine in 0.3 mL.

$$\frac{150\text{ mg pilocarpine}}{15\text{ mL}} = \frac{X\text{ mg}}{0.3\text{ mL}} \quad X = 3\text{ mg pilocarpine}$$

10. A pharmacist dissolves 6 tablets. Each tablet contains 250 mg of metronidazole. The pharmacist will put the drug into a liquid base to prepare 60 mL of a topical solution. What is the percentage strength (w/v) of metronidazole in the prescription? Round to the nearest tenth.

$$6\text{ tablets} \times \frac{250\text{ mg}}{1\text{ tab}} = 1{,}500\text{ mg, or }1.5\text{ g metronidazole}$$

$$\frac{1.5\text{ g}}{60\text{ mL}} = \frac{X\text{ g}}{100\text{ mL}} \quad X = 2.5\text{ g, which is }2.5\%\text{ w/v}$$

11. If 12 grams of lanolin are combined with 2 grams of white wax and 36 grams of petrolatum to make an ointment, what is the percentage strength (w/w) of lanolin in the ointment?

$$\frac{12\text{ g lanolin}}{50\text{ g ointment}} = \frac{X\text{ g}}{100\text{ g}} \quad X = 24\%\text{ w/w}$$

12. A pharmacist adds 5.3 grams of hydrocortisone to 150 grams of a 2.5% hydrocortisone ointment. What is the percentage (w/w) of hydrocortisone in the finished product? Round to the nearest whole number.

First, determine the amount of hydrocortisone (HC) in the current product.

$$\frac{2.5\text{ g HC}}{100\text{ g ointment}} = \frac{X\text{ g HC}}{150\text{ g ointment}} \quad X = 3.75\text{ g HC}$$

5.3 grams of HC is being added to the existing product, which contains 3.75 g of HC: 5.3 g + 3.75 g = 9.05 g.

Next, find the percent concentration of the final product (5.3 g + 150 g = 155.3 g).

$$\frac{9.05\text{ g HC}}{155.3\text{ g ointment}} = \frac{X\text{ g HC}}{100\text{ g ointment}} \quad X = 5.8274\text{ g, rounded to 6\% w/w}$$

13. How many milliliters of hydrocortisone liquid (40 mg/mL) will be needed to prepare 30 grams of a 0.25% cream (w/w)? Round to the nearest hundredth.

First, calculate the amount of hydrocortisone needed in the final product.

$$\frac{0.25\text{ g}}{100\text{ g}} = \frac{X\text{ g}}{30\text{ g}} \quad X = 0.075\text{ g or }75\text{ mg}$$

Then, solve for mL of hydrocortisone liquid needed.

$$\frac{40\text{ mg}}{\text{mL}} = \frac{75\text{ mg}}{X\text{ mL}} \quad X = 1.875\text{ mL, rounded to }1.88\text{ mL}$$

After solving the problem, read the question again to be certain the question was answered with the correct units (mL).

14. What is the percentage strength of imiquimod in the following prescription? Round to the nearest hundredth.

PRESCRIPTION	QUANTITY
Imiquimod 5% cream	15 g
Lidocaine	20 g
Hydrophilic ointment	25 g

First, calculate the amount of imiquimod (5%) in the prescription.

$$\frac{5\text{ g}}{100\text{ g}} \times 15\text{ g} = 0.75\text{ grams of imiquimod}$$

The total weight of the prescription is 60 g (15 g + 20 g + 25 g).

$$\frac{0.75\text{ g}}{60\text{ g}} = \frac{X\text{ g}}{100\text{ g}} \quad X = 1.25\text{ g, which is }1.25\%\text{ w/w}$$

RATIO STRENGTH

The concentration of a weak solution can be expressed as a ratio strength. It is denoted as one unit of solute contained in the total amount of the solution or mixture (e.g., 1:500). Ratio strength is another way of presenting a percentage strength. This makes sense because percentages are ratios of parts per hundred.

In clinical practice, ratio strengths have been associated with medication errors. The FDA now requires removal of ratio strengths from the labeling of injectable drug products with only one active ingredient (e.g., epinephrine, isoproterenol). Ratio strength may still be used in compounding.

SHORTCUT FOR RATIO STRENGTH

Most multi-step calculations will require converting ratio strength to percentage strength. If a ratio strength is presented in a problem, convert it to a percentage strength and convert it back if needed.

- Ratio strength → Percentage strength
  - % strength = 100 / ratio strength
- Percentage strength → Ratio strength
  - Ratio strength = 100 / % strength

15. Express 0.04% as a ratio strength.

$$\frac{0.04}{100} = \frac{1 \text{ part}}{X \text{ parts}}$$ X = 2,500. Ratio strength is 1:2,500

Convert back to 0.04% by taking 1/2,500 x 100 or simply 100/2,500. Try it.

On the exam there will be instructions for how to enter your answer. Usually you will enter the numbers after the colon in the ratio strength (e.g., for this problem, you would enter 2500). The instructions could read "Calculate the ratio strength. Enter only the numbers after the colon, as shown here with Xs: 1:XXX."

16. Express 1:4,000 as a percentage strength.

$$\frac{1 \text{ part}}{4{,}000 \text{ parts}} = \frac{X}{100}$$ X = 0.025, which is 0.025%

The shortcut in the box above can also be used for converting between ratio and percentage strength:

Percentage strength = 100 / 4,000 = 0.025%

17. There are 50 mg of drug in 50 mL of solution. Express the concentration as a ratio strength.

First, convert 50 mg to grams. 50 mg x 1 g/1,000 mg = 0.05 g

Then, calculate grams per 100 mL.

$$\frac{0.05 \text{ g}}{50 \text{ mL}} = \frac{X \text{ g}}{100 \text{ mL}}$$ X = 0.1 g

Now solve for ratio strength.

$$\frac{0.1 \text{ g}}{100 \text{ mL}} = \frac{1 \text{ part}}{X \text{ parts}}$$ X = 1,000, or 1:1,000

18. How many milligrams of iodine should be used in compounding the following prescription?

ITEM	QUANTITY
Iodine	1:400
Hydrophilic ointment qs ad	10 g
Sig. Apply as directed.	

First, convert the ratio strength to a percentage strength.

$$\frac{1 \text{ part}}{400 \text{ parts}} = \frac{X \text{ g}}{100 \text{ g}} \quad X = 0.25\% \text{ w/w}$$

Then, determine how much iodine will be needed for the prescription.

$$\frac{0.25 \text{ g}}{100 \text{ g}} = \frac{X \text{ g}}{10 \text{ g}} \quad X = 0.025 \text{ g, or } 25 \text{ mg}$$

Or, solve another way:

1:400 means 1 g in 400 g of ointment.

$$\frac{1 \text{ g}}{400 \text{ g}} = \frac{X \text{ g}}{10 \text{ g}} \quad X = 0.025 \text{ g, or } 25 \text{ mg}$$

19. A 10 mL mixture contains 0.25 mL of active drug. Express the concentration as a percentage strength (v/v) and a ratio strength.

First, find out how much drug is in 100 mL.

$$\frac{0.25 \text{ mL drug}}{10 \text{ mL}} = \frac{X \text{ mL drug}}{100 \text{ mL}} \quad X = 2.5 \text{ mL, or } 2.5\% \text{ (v/v)}$$

Now solve for ratio strength.

$$\frac{2.5 \text{ mL drug}}{100 \text{ mL}} = \frac{1 \text{ part}}{X \text{ parts}} \quad X = 40; \text{ or } 1{:}40$$

20. What is the concentration, in ratio strength, of a trituration made by combining 150 mg of albuterol sulfate and 4.05 grams of lactose?

First, add up the total weight of the prescription.

$$0.150 \text{ g} + 4.05 \text{ g} = 4.2 \text{ g}$$

Now solve for ratio strength.

$$\frac{0.150 \text{ g}}{4.2 \text{ g}} = \frac{1 \text{ part}}{X \text{ parts}} \quad X = 28, \text{ or } 1{:}28$$

Refer to the Compounding chapters for discussion of trituration and other compounding terminology.

PARTS PER MILLION

Parts per million (ppm) and parts per billion (ppb) are used to express the strength of very dilute solutions. They are defined as the number of parts of the drug per 1 million (or 1 billion) parts of the whole. The same designations are used as for percentage strength (% w/w, % w/v and % v/v).

SHORTCUT FOR PARTS PER MILLION

- ppm → Percentage strength
  - Move the decimal left 4 places
- Percentage strength → ppm
  - Move the decimal right 4 places

21. Express 0.00022% (w/v) as ppm. Round to the nearest tenth.

$$\frac{0.00022\ g}{100\ mL} = \frac{X\ parts}{1{,}000{,}000} \qquad X = 2.2\ ppm$$

22. Express 30 ppm of copper in solution as a percentage.

$$\frac{30\ parts}{1{,}000{,}000} = \frac{X\ g}{100\ mL} \qquad X = 0.003\%$$

23. Express 5 ppm of iron in water as a percentage.

$$\frac{5\ parts}{1{,}000{,}000} = \frac{X\ g}{100\ mL} \qquad X = 0.0005\%$$

24. A patient's blood contains 0.085 ppm of selenium. How many micrograms of selenium does the patient's blood contain if the blood volume is 6 liters?

$$\frac{0.085\ parts}{1{,}000{,}000} = \frac{X\ g}{6{,}000\ mL} \qquad X = 0.00051\ g,\ or\ 510\ mcg$$

25. A sample of an intravenous solution is found to contain 0.4 ppm of DEHP. How much of the solution, in milliliters, will contain 50 micrograms of DEHP?

$$\frac{0.4\ parts}{1{,}000{,}000} = \frac{0.00005\ g}{X\ mL} \qquad X = 125\ mL$$

If asked to express something in ppb (parts per billion), divide by 1,000,000,000 (9 zeros).

SPECIFIC GRAVITY

Specific gravity (SG) is the ratio of the density of a substance (g/mL) to the density of water (1 g/mL). Water has a specific gravity of 1; 1 g water = 1 mL water. Substances with a SG < 1 are lighter than water and those with SG > 1 are heavier than water. SG can be important for calculating doses of IV medications, in compounding and in interpreting a urinalysis.

$$SG = \frac{\text{weight of substance (g)}}{\text{weight of equal volume of water (g)}} \quad \text{or more simply:} \quad SG = \frac{g}{mL}$$

26. What is the specific gravity of 150 mL of glycerin weighing 165 grams? Round to the nearest tenth.

$$SG = \frac{165\ g}{150\ mL} \qquad SG = 1.1$$

Check the answer: 150 mL x 1.1 = 165 g

27. What is the weight of 750 mL of concentrated acetic acid (SG = 1.2)?

$$1.2 = \frac{X\ g}{750\ mL} \qquad X = 900\ g$$

Check the answer: 900 g/750 mL = 1.2

28. How many milliliters of polysorbate 80 (SG = 1.08) are needed to prepare a prescription that includes 48 grams of the surfactant/emulsifier (polysorbate)? Round to the nearest hundredth.

$$1.08 = \frac{48\ g}{X\ mL} \qquad X = 44.44\ mL$$

29. What is the specific gravity of 30 mL of a liquid weighing 23,400 milligrams? Round to the nearest hundredth.

$$SG = \frac{23.4\ g}{30\ mL} \qquad SG = 0.78$$

30. What is the weight of 0.5 L of polyethylene glycol 400 (SG = 1.13)?

$$1.13 = \frac{X\ g}{500\ mL} \qquad X = 565\ grams$$

31. Nitroglycerin has a specific gravity of 1.59. How much would 1 quart weigh in grams? Use 1 quart = 946 mL. Round to the nearest whole number.

$$1.59 = \frac{X\ g}{946\ mL} \qquad X = 1{,}504\ g$$

Check the answer: 1,504 g/946 mL = 1.59

Note that the SG is equivalent to the density in g/mL (with units). If asked for the density in the above problem, the answer would be 1.59 g/mL.

DILUTION AND CONCENTRATION

Q1C1

This formula can be used to change the strength or quantity. Q1C1 is used when the problem deals with two concentrations. Be careful: the units on each side must match and one or more may need to be changed, such as mg to gram, or vice-versa.

$$Q1 \times C1 = Q2 \times C2$$

Q1 = old quantity Q2 = new quantity

C1 = old concentration C2 = new concentration

0% AND 100%

If the prescription calls for an ingredient that is pure, the concentration is 100%.

A diluent (e.g., petrolatum, lanolin, alcohol, ointment base, inert base, lactose) does not contain the drug in question – the concentration of the diluent is 0%.

32. A pharmacist has an order for parenteral nutrition that includes 550 mL of D70%. The pharmacist checks the supplies and finds the closest strength he has available is D50%. How many milliliters of D50% will provide an equivalent energy requirement?

$$550\ mL \times 70\% = Q2 \times 50\%$$

Q2 = 770 mL of D50%

33. How many grams of petrolatum (diluent) should be added to 250 grams of a 20% ichthammol ointment to make a 7% ichthammol ointment? Round to the nearest tenth.

Note the difference from the previous problem. In this example, the problem asks how much diluent should be added to make the final weight.

$$250\ g \times 20\% = Q2 \times 7\%$$

Q2 = 714.3 g of 7% ichthammol ointment

Read the question again to be certain about what is being asked. Since the question did not ask how much of the 7% ointment can be prepared, but rather how much diluent is required, an additional step is needed:

714.3 g total weight – 250 g (already present) = 464.3 g petrolatum required

34. A patient has been receiving 200 mL of an enteral mixture that contains 432 mOsm/L. The pharmacist will reduce the contents to 278 mOsm/L. How many milliliters of bacteriostatic water should be added to the bag? Round to the nearest mL.

200 mL x 432 mOsm/L = Q2 x 278 mOsm/L X = 311 mL

Q2 = 311 mL of the 278 mOsm/L enteral mixture can be prepared

There are 200 mL in the original bag. The final volume will be 311 mL.

311 mL - 200 mL = 111 mL of bacteriostatic water

35. If 1 gallon of a 20% (w/v) solution is evaporated to a solution with a 50% (w/v) strength, what will be the new volume (in milliliters)? Round to the nearest 100 mL.

3,840 mL x 20% = Q2 x 50%

Q2 = 1,536 mL, rounded to the nearest 100 mL = 1,500 mL

The final answer will be the same if the actual conversion for gallon to milliliters is used.

36. Using 20 grams of a 9% boric acid ointment base, the pharmacist will manufacture a 5% ointment. How much diluent is required?

20 g x 9% = Q2 x 5%

Q2 = 36 g of the 5% ointment can be prepared

36 g total weight - 20 g (already present) = 16 g diluent required

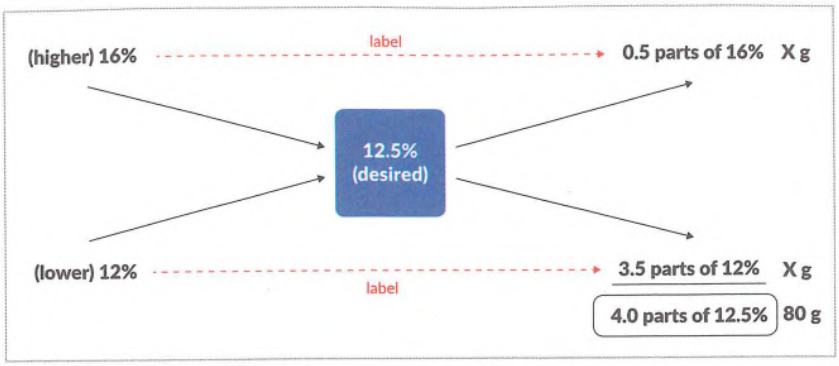
ALLIGATION

Alligation is used to obtain a new strength (percentage) that is between two strengths the pharmacist has in stock. It is used when the problem deals with three concentrations.

SETTING UP AN ALLIGATION

- High goes high: write the higher concentration at the top left.
- Low goes low: write the lower concentration on the lower left.
- Write the desired concentration in the middle.
- Subtract diagonally along the X lines to obtain the number of parts. Write the absolute number (no negative sign) on the right side of the X.
  - 16% – 12.5% = 3.5 parts
  - 12% – 12.5% = 0.5 parts
- Label horizontally along the dashed lines; the starting concentrations are carried across.
- For some problems, it will be necessary to add up the total number of parts (as shown).

37. A pharmacist is asked to prepare 80 grams of a 12.5% ichthammol ointment with 16% and 12% ichthammol ointments that she has in stock. How many grams of the 16% and 12% ointment are required?



Divide the total weight (80 g) by the number of parts to get the weight per part.

$$\frac{80\text{ g}}{4\text{ parts}} = 20\text{ grams per part}$$

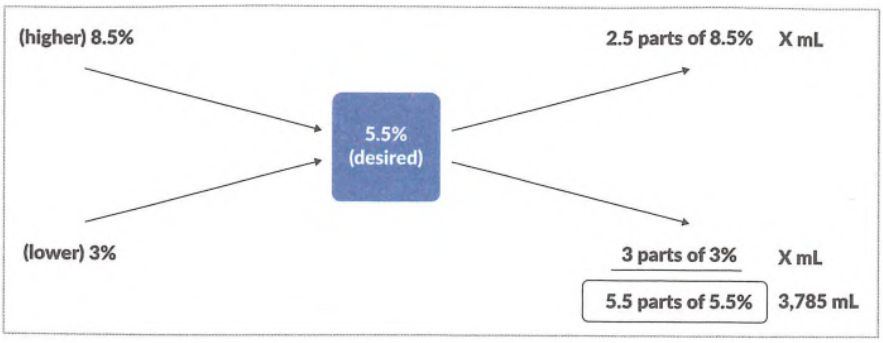
Take the amount per part (20 g) and multiply it by the parts from each of the concentrations (from the high, and from the low).

$$0.5\text{ parts of }16\% \times \frac{20\text{ g}}{\text{part}} = 10\text{ g of the 16\% ichthammol ointment}$$

$$3.5\text{ parts of }12\% \times \frac{20\text{ g}}{\text{part}} = 70\text{ g of the 12\% ichthammol ointment}$$

When the two quantities are mixed together, the pharmacist will have 80 g of a 12.5% ichthammol ointment.

38. A pharmacist is asked to prepare 1 gallon of tincture containing 5.5% iodine. The pharmacy has 3% iodine tincture and 8.5% iodine tincture in stock. How many milliliters of the 3% and 8.5% iodine tincture should be used? (Use 1 gallon = 3,785 mL)



Divide the total volume (3,785 mL) by the number of parts to obtain the volume per part.

$$\frac{3{,}785\ \text{mL}}{5.5\ \text{parts}} = 688.2\ \text{mL per part}$$

$$2.5\ \text{parts} \times \frac{688.2\ \text{mL}}{\text{part}} = 1{,}720\ \text{mL of the 8.5\% iodine tincture}$$

$$3\ \text{parts} \times \frac{688.2\ \text{mL}}{\text{part}} = 2{,}065\ \text{mL of the 3\% iodine tincture}$$

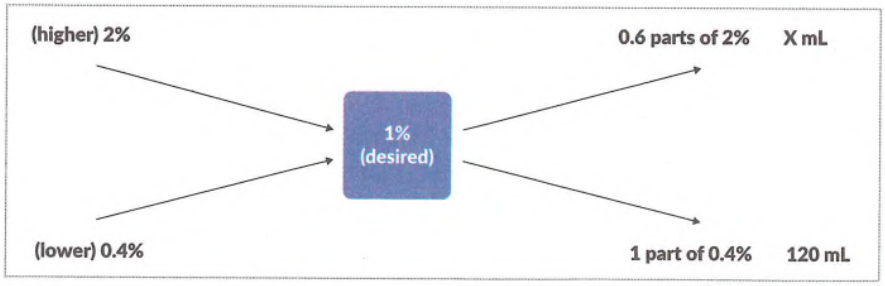
The end product provides 3,785 mL of a 5.5% iodine tincture. Alligation can also be used when the final volume is not known, as shown in the next problem.

39. A hospice pharmacist receives a prescription for 1% morphine sulfate oral solution. She has a 120 mL bottle of morphine sulfate labeled 20 mg/5 mL and a 240 mL bottle of morphine sulfate labeled 100 mg/5 mL. How much of the 100 mg/5 mL product must be mixed with the contents of the 20 mg/5 mL morphine sulfate bottle to prepare the desired percentage strength for the patient?

First determine the percentage strengths of the two available products.

20 mg/5 mL $\quad \frac{0.02\ \text{g}}{5\ \text{mL}} = \frac{X\ \text{g}}{100\ \text{mL}} \quad X = 0.4\%$

100 mg/5 mL $\quad \frac{0.1\ \text{g}}{5\ \text{mL}} = \frac{X\ \text{g}}{100\ \text{mL}} \quad X = 2\%$



In this case, we do not know the final volume of the product, but we know the proper ratio of the parts (0.6:1).

$$\frac{1\ \text{part of 0.4\% morphine}}{0.6\ \text{parts of 2\% morphine}} = \frac{120\ \text{mL of 0.4\% morphine}}{X\ \text{mL of 2\% morphine}} \qquad X = 72\ \text{mL of 2\% morphine sulfate}$$

72 mL of 2% (100 mg/5 mL) morphine sulfate must be added to the 120 mL of 0.4% (20 mg/5 mL) morphine sulfate to get a 1% solution. Ultimately, 192 mL of 1% product can be prepared, but the alligation must be solved to determine that.

40. A pharmacist must prepare 100 grams of a 50% hydrocortisone powder using the 25% and 75% powders that she has in stock. How much of each is required?

Since the desired strength is exactly in the middle of the strengths available, divide the desired quantity in half: 100 g / 2 = 50 grams. Use 50 g of the 75% and 50 g of the 25% to prepare 100 g of a 50% powder.

DILUTION AND CONCENTRATION EXTRA CREDIT

How many milliliters of sargramostim 500 mcg/mL must be diluted with 250 mL of normal saline to prepare a concentration of 20 mcg/mL?

The final volume is not 250 mL. When the final volume is unknown, you cannot use simple Q1C1. Two methods to solve this problem are shown: the algebraic method (below) and alligation (below, right; which is set up like #39 with unknown final volume). Notice in the alligation, the normal saline is labeled "0 mcg/mL." It is serving as a diluent here. Normal saline contains 0 mcg/mL of sargramostim.

$Q_1C_1 + Q_2C_2 = (Q_1+Q_2)(C_3)$

250 mL (0 mcg/mL) + X mL (500 mcg/mL) = (250 mL + X mL)(20 mcg/mL)

0 + 500X = 5,000 + 20X

480X = 5,000

X = 10.417 mL

500 mcg/mL — 20 parts of 500 mcg/mL — X mL

20 mcg/mL

0 mcg/mL (NS) — 480 parts of 0 mcg/mL (NS) — 250 mL

$$\frac{\text{20 parts 500 mcg/mL}}{\text{480 parts 0 mcg/mL (NS)}} = \frac{\text{X mL}}{\text{250 mL}} \quad \text{X} = 10.417 \text{ mL}$$

Solve in reverse to check yourself:

500 mcg/mL = X mcg/10.417 mL

X = 5,208.5 mcg

Total volume = 10.417 mL + 250 mL = 260.417 mL

5,208.5 mcg/260.417 mL = 20 mcg/mL final concentration

OSMOLARITY

The total number of particles in a given solution is directly proportional to its osmotic pressure. The particles are usually measured in milliosmoles. Osmolarity is the measure of total number of particles (or solutes) per liter of solution, defined as osmoles/liter (Osmol/L) or, more commonly as milliosmoles/liter (mOsmol/L or mOsm/L). Solutes can be either ionic (such as NaCl, which dissociates into two solutes in solution, Na^+ and Cl^-) or non-ionic (which do not dissociate, such as glucose and urea).

Since the volume of water changes according to temperature, the term osmolality (mOsmol/kg) is used in clinical practice; it is independent of temperature. When solute concentrations are very low, osmolarity and osmolality are similar.

COMPOUND	# OF DISSOCIATION PARTICLES
Dextrose	1
Mannitol	
Potassium chloride (KCl)	2
Sodium chloride (NaCl)	
Sodium acetate ($NaC_2H_3O_2$)	
Magnesium sulfate ($MgSO_4$)	
Calcium chloride ($CaCl_2$)	3
Sodium citrate ($Na_3C_6H_5O_7$)	4

Milliosmole calculation problems differ from osmolarity calculation problems in that osmolarity will always need to be normalized to a volume of 1 liter. Math problems usually use osmolarity. The compounds and dissociation particles shown in the table should be known for the exam.

$$\text{mOsmol/L} = \frac{\text{Wt of substance (g/L)}}{\text{MW (g/mole)}} \times (\#\text{ of particles}) \times 1{,}000$$

Step 1. Add up the number of particles into which the compound dissociates.

Step 2. Calculate the number of grams of the compound present in 1 L.

Step 3. Use the molecular weight (MW) to solve the problem.

Milliosmole calculations do not normalize to 1 liter.

---

41. What is the osmolarity, in mOsmol/L, of normal saline (0.9% NaCl)? MW = 58.5 g/mol. Round to the nearest whole number.

NaCl dissociates into 2 particles; Na^+ and Cl^-.

Calculate the number of grams of the compound (NaCl) present in 1 L.

$$\frac{0.9\ g}{100\ mL} = \frac{X\ g}{1{,}000\ mL} \quad X = 9\ g$$

Use the molecular weight to solve for mOsmol/L.

$$\text{mOsmol/L} = \frac{9\ g/L}{58.5\ g/mol} \times 2 \times 1{,}000 = 308\ \text{mOsmol/L}$$

---

42. What is the osmolarity, in mOsmol/L, of D5W? MW = 198 g/mol. Round to the nearest tenth.

Dextrose does not dissociate and is counted as 1 particle.

$$\frac{5\ g}{100\ mL} = \frac{X\ g}{1{,}000\ mL} \quad X = 50\ g$$

Use the molecular weight to solve for mOsmol/L.

$$\text{mOsmol/L} = \frac{50\ g/L}{198\ g/mol} \times 1 \times 1{,}000 = 252.5\ \text{mOsmol/L}$$

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43. How many milliosmoles of $CaCl_2$ (MW= 111 g/mol) are represented in 150 mL of a 10% (w/v) calcium chloride solution? Round to the nearest whole number.

$$\frac{10\ g}{100\ mL} = \frac{X\ g}{150\ mL} \quad X = 15\ g$$

$$\text{mOsmol} = \frac{15\ g}{111\ g/mol} \times 3 \times 1{,}000 = 405\ \text{mOsmol}$$

Note that the problem is asking for milliosmoles and not osmolarity. The answer is in milliosmoles and not mOsmol/L. It is not normalized to 1 liter.

44. A solution contains 373 mg Na ions per liter. How many milliosmoles are represented in the solution? MW = 23 g/mol. Round to the nearest tenth.

First, convert the units to match the formula.

$$\frac{373 \text{ mg Na}}{\text{L}} \times \frac{1 \text{ g}}{1{,}000 \text{ mg}} = 0.373 \text{ g/L}$$

$$\text{mOsmol} = \frac{0.373 \text{ g/L}}{23 \text{ g/mol}} \times 1 \times 1{,}000 = 16.2 \text{ mOsmol}$$

The problem asks for milliosmoles and not osmolarity. Since the problem provides the amount of Na ions in 1 liter, the numerical answer is the same (mOsmol or mOsmol/L).

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45. How many grams of potassium chloride are needed to make 200 mL of a solution containing 250 mOsmol/L? Round to the nearest hundredth. K (MW = 39 g/mol), Cl (MW = 35.5 g/mol)

First calculate the MW of KCl.

$$\text{MW of KCl} = \text{MW of K} + \text{MW of Cl} = 39 + 35.5 = 74.5$$

$$250 \text{ mOsmol/L} = \frac{X}{74.5} \times 2 \times 1{,}000 \quad X = 9.31 \text{ g/L}$$

$$\frac{9.31 \text{ g}}{1{,}000 \text{ mL}} = \frac{X \text{ g}}{200 \text{ mL}} \quad X = 1.86 \text{ g}$$

You may be provided with the molecular weight on the exam or asked to calculate it.

---

46. A solution contains 200 mg of Ca ions per liter. How many milliosmoles are represented in the solution? MW = 40 g/mol.

$$\text{mOsmol} = \frac{0.2 \text{ g/L}}{40 \text{ g/mol}} \times 1 \times 1{,}000 = 5 \text{ mOsmol}$$

The problem is asking for milliosmoles and not osmolarity. The answer is in milliosmoles and not mOsmol/L. It is not normalized to 1 liter.

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47. Calculate the osmolar concentration, in milliosmoles, represented by 1 liter of a 10% (w/v) solution of anhydrous dextrose (MW = 180 g/mol) in water. Round to the nearest one decimal place.

$$\frac{10 \text{ g}}{100 \text{ mL}} = \frac{X \text{ g}}{1{,}000 \text{ mL}} \quad X = 100 \text{ g}$$

$$\text{mOsmol} = \frac{100 \text{ g/L}}{180 \text{ g/mol}} \times 1 \times 1{,}000 = 555.6 \text{ mOsmol}$$

The problem asks for milliosmoles and not osmolarity. Since the problem asks for mOsmol of dextrose in 1 liter, the numerical answer is the same (mOsmol or mOsmol/L).

48. A patient was ordered 1 liter of D5NS with 20 mEq of KCl for dehydration. How many milliosmoles are in 1 liter of this fluid (MW dextrose = 198 g/mol, Na = 23 g/mol, K = 39 g/mol, Cl = 35.5 g/mol)? Round to the nearest whole number.

First, solve for the osmolarity of the dextrose component.

$$\frac{5 \text{ g dextrose}}{100 \text{ mL}} \times \frac{X \text{ g}}{1{,}000 \text{ mL}} = 50 \text{ g/L}$$

$$\text{mOsmol} = \frac{50 \text{ g/L}}{198 \text{ g/mol}} \times 1 \times 1{,}000 = 252.5252 \text{ mOsmol/L}$$

Next, solve for the osmolarity of the NS component.

$$\frac{0.9 \text{ g NaCl}}{100 \text{ mL}} \times \frac{X \text{ g}}{1{,}000 \text{ mL}} = 9 \text{ g/L}$$

$$\text{mOsmol} = \frac{9 \text{ g/L}}{58.5 \text{ g/mol}} \times 2 \times 1{,}000 = 307.6922 \text{ mOsmol/L}$$

Then, solve for the osmolarity of the KCl component, using the milliequivalent formula (reviewed later in this chapter).

$$20 \text{ mEq} = \frac{X \text{ mg} \times 1}{74.5} = 1{,}490 \text{ mg} = 1.49 \text{ g}$$

$$\text{mOsmol} = \frac{1.49 \text{ g/L}}{74.5 \text{ g/mol}} \times 2 \times 1{,}000 = 40 \text{ mOsmol/L}$$

The final step is to add the three components together to find the total osmolarity.

252.5252 mOsmol/L dextrose + 307.6922 mOsmol/L NaCl + 40 mOsmol/L KCl = 600.217 mOsmol/L, or 600 mOsmol/L

ISOTONICITY

When discussing osmotic pressure gradients between fluids, the term tonicity is used; solutions can be isotonic (osmolality is the same as blood, which is ~300 mOsmol/kg), hypotonic or hypertonic. When solutions are prepared, they need to match the tonicity of the body fluid as closely as possible. If the osmolality is higher in one cellular compartment, it will cause water to move from the lower to the higher concentration of solutes. If a parenteral nutrition (PN) solution is injected with a higher osmolality than blood, fluid will flow into the vein, resulting in edema, inflammation, phlebitis and possible thrombosis. Isotonicity is desired when preparing eye drops and nasal solutions.

Since isotonicity is related to the number of particles in solution, the dissociation factor (or ionization), symbolized by the letter *i*, is determined for the compound (drug). Non-ionic compounds do not dissociate and will have a dissociation factor, *i*, of one. The table shows the dissociation factors (*i*) based on the percentage that dissociates into ions; for example, a dissociation factor of 1.8 means that 80% of the compound will dissociate in a weak solution.

NUMBER OF DISSOCIATED IONS	DISSOCIATION FACTOR (OR IONIZATION) *i*	
1	1	+ 0.8
2	1.8	+ 0.8
3	2.6	+ 0.8
4	3.4	+ 0.8
5	4.2	

As mentioned previously, body fluids are isotonic with 0.9% sodium chloride and have an osmotic pressure equivalent to 0.9% sodium chloride. When making a medication to place into a body fluid, the drug provides solutes to the solvent and needs to be accounted for in the prescription in order to avoid making the prescription hypertonic. The relationship between the amount of drug that produces a particular osmolarity and the amount of sodium chloride that produces the same osmolarity is called the sodium chloride equivalent, or "E value" for short. This is the formula for calculating the E value of a compound:

$$E = \frac{(58.5)(i)}{(\text{MW of drug})(1.8)}$$

The "E value" formula takes into account the molecular weight of NaCl (58.5) and the dissociation factor of 1.8 since normal saline is around 80% ionized, adding 0.8 for each additional ion beyond 1 into which the drug dissociates. The compound being prepared is compared to NaCl because NaCl is the major determinant of the isotonicity of body fluid.

Once the "E value" is determined, the following steps outline the process of doing isotonicity problems:

Step 1. Calculate the total amount of NaCl needed to make the final product/prescription isotonic by multiplying 0.9% NS by the desired volume of the prescription.

Step 2. Calculate the amount of NaCl represented by the drug. To do this, multiply the total drug amount (in milligrams or grams) by the "E value."

Step 3. Subtract step 2 from step 1 to determine the total amount of NaCl needed to prepare an isotonic prescription.

---

49. Calculate the E value for mannitol (MW = 182 g/mol). Round to the nearest hundredth.

$$\frac{(58.5)(i)}{(\text{MW of drug})(1.8)} = \frac{58.5\ (1)}{182\ (1.8)} = 0.18$$

50. The E value for ephedrine sulfate is 0.23. How many grams of sodium chloride are needed to compound the following prescription? Round to 3 decimal places.

PRESCRIPTION	QUANTITY
Ephedrine sulfate	0.4 g
Sodium chloride	qs
Purified water qs	30 mL
Make isotonic	
Sig. Use 2 drops in each nostril as directed.	

Step 1. Determine how much NaCl would make the product isotonic.

$$\frac{0.9\ g}{100\ mL} = \frac{X}{30\ mL} \qquad X = 0.27\ g$$

Step 2. Determine amount of sodium chloride represented from ephedrine sulfate.

0.4 g x 0.23 ("E value") = 0.092 g of sodium chloride

Step 3. Subtract step 2 from step 1.

0.27 g - 0.092 g = 0.178 g of NaCl are needed to make an isotonic solution

51. Calculate the E value for potassium iodide, which dissociates into 2 particles (MW = 166 g/mol). Round to two decimal places.

$$\frac{(58.5)(i)}{(\text{MW of drug})(1.8)} = \frac{58.5\ (1.8)}{166\ (1.8)} = 0.35$$

52. Physostigmine salicylate (MW = 413 g/mol) is a 2-ion electrolyte, dissociating 80% in a given concentration (i.e., use a dissociation factor of 1.8). Calculate its sodium chloride equivalent. Round to two decimal places.

$$\frac{(58.5)(i)}{(\text{MW of drug})(1.8)} = \frac{58.5\ (1.8)}{413\ (1.8)} = 0.14$$

53. The pharmacist receives an order for 10 mL of tobramycin 1% ophthalmic solution. He has tobramycin 40 mg/mL solution. Tobramycin does not dissociate and has a MW of 468 g/mol. Find the E value for tobramycin and determine how many milligrams of NaCl are needed to make the solution isotonic.

$$\frac{(58.5)(i)}{(\text{MW of drug})(1.8)} = \frac{58.5\ (1)}{468\ (1.8)} = 0.07, \text{ which is the "E value" for tobramycin}$$

The "E value" for tobramycin is 0.07. The prescription asks for 10 mL of 1% solution.

Step 1. Determine how much NaCl would make the product isotonic (if that is all you were using).

$$\frac{0.9\ g}{100\ mL} = \frac{X}{10\ mL} \quad X = 0.09\ g, \text{ or } 90\ mg$$

Step 2. Determine amount of sodium chloride represented from tobramycin.

$$\frac{1\ g}{100\ mL} = \frac{X}{10\ mL} \quad X = 0.1\ g, \text{ or } 100\ mg$$

100 mg x 0.07 ("E value") = 7 mg of sodium chloride

Step 3. Subtract step 2 from step 1. You are using tobramycin, so you do not need all the NaCl. Subtract out the equivalent amount of tonicity provided by the tobramycin, which is 7 mg.

90 mg - 7 mg = 83 mg (83 mg additional sodium chloride is needed to make an isotonic solution)

MOLES AND MILLIMOLES

A mole (mol) is the molecular weight of a substance in grams, or g/mole. A millimole (mmol) is 1/1,000 of the molecular weight in grams, or 1/1,000 of a mole. For monovalent species, the numeric value of the milliequivalent and millimole are identical.

$$\text{mols} = \frac{g}{MW} \quad \text{or} \quad \text{mmols} = \frac{mg}{MW}$$

54. How many moles of anhydrous magnesium sulfate (MW = 120.4 g/mol) are present in 250 grams of the substance? Round to the nearest hundredth.

$$\text{mols} = \frac{250\ g}{120.4} = 2.076, \text{ or } 2.08 \text{ mols}$$

55. How many moles are equivalent to 875 milligrams of aluminum acetate (MW = 204 g/mol)? Round to 3 decimal places.

First, convert 875 mg to grams.

$$875 \text{ mg} \times \frac{1 \text{ g}}{1{,}000 \text{ mg}} = 0.875 \text{ g}$$

Next, solve for mols.

$$\text{mols} = \frac{0.875 \text{ g}}{204} = 0.004 \text{ mols}$$

56. How many millimoles of sodium phosphate (MW = 138 g/mol) are present in 90 g of the substance? Round to the nearest whole number.

$$\text{mmols} = \frac{90{,}000 \text{ mg}}{138} = 652 \text{ mmols}$$

Or, solve another way:

$$\frac{90 \text{ g}}{138} = 0.652 \text{ mols, which is } 652 \text{ mmols}$$

57. How many moles are equivalent to 45 grams of potassium carbonate (MW = 138 g/mol)? Round to the nearest thousandth.

$$\text{mols} = \frac{45 \text{ g}}{138} = 0.326 \text{ mols}$$

58. How many millimoles of calcium chloride (MW = 147 g/mol) are represented in 147 mL of a 10% (w/v) calcium chloride solution?

Step 1: Calculate the amount (g) of $CaCl_2$ in 147 mL of 10% $CaCl_2$ solution.

$$\frac{10 \text{ g}}{100 \text{ mL}} = \frac{X \text{ g}}{147 \text{ mL}} \quad X = 14.7 \text{ g}$$

Step 2: Calculate the mols of $CaCl_2$ in 147 mL of 10% $CaCl_2$ solution.

$$\text{mols} = \frac{14.7 \text{ g}}{147} = 0.1 \text{ mol}$$

Step 3: Solve the problem by converting moles to millimoles.

$$0.1 \text{ mol} \times 1{,}000 = 100 \text{ mmols}$$

59. How many milligrams of sodium chloride (MW = 58.5 g/mol) represent 0.25 mmol? Do not round the answer.

$$0.25 \text{ mmols} = \frac{X \text{ mg}}{58.5} \quad X = 14.625 \text{ mg}$$

60. How many grams of sodium chloride (MW = 58.5 g/mol) should be used to prepare this solution? Do not round the answer.

PRESCRIPTION	QUANTITY
Methylprednisolone	0.5 g
NaCl solution	60 mL
Each 5 mL should contain 0.6 mmols of NaCl	

First, determine how many mmols of NaCl will be in 60 mL of the compounded preparation.

$$\frac{0.6 \text{ mmols}}{5 \text{ mL}} = \frac{X \text{ mmols}}{60 \text{ mL}} \qquad X = 7.2 \text{ mmols NaCl}$$

Next, use the total mmols of NaCl to calculate grams of NaCl.

$$7.2 \text{ mmols} = \frac{X \text{ mg}}{58.5} \qquad X = 421.2 \text{ mg or } 0.4212 \text{ g NaCl}$$

MILLIEQUIVALENTS

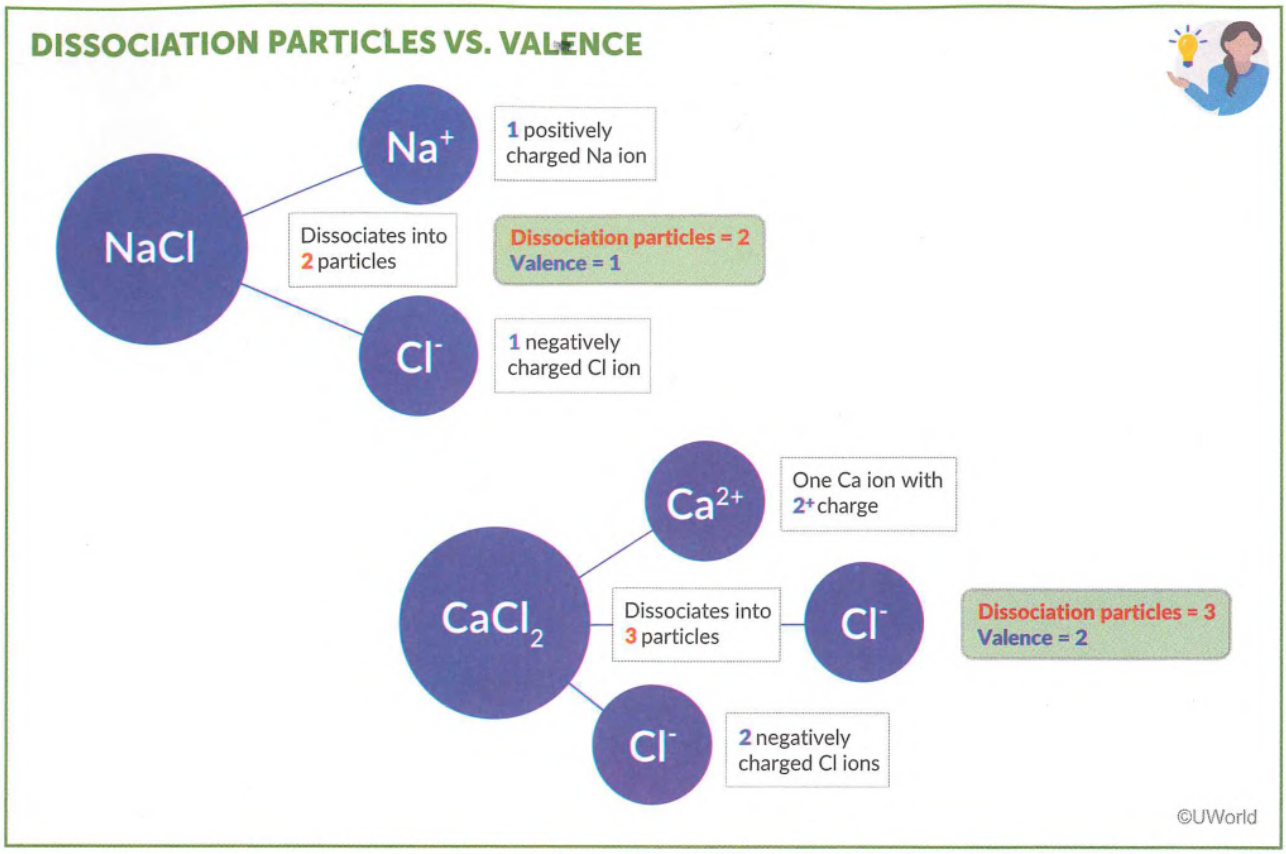
Drugs can be expressed in solution in different ways:

- Milliosmoles refers to the number of particles in solution.
- Millimoles refers to the molecular weight (MW).
- Milliequivalents (mEq) represent the amount, in milligrams (mg), of a solute equal to 1/1,000 of its gram equivalent weight, taking into account the valence of the ions. Like osmolarity, the quantity of particles is important – but so is the electrical charge. Milliequivalents refers to the chemical activity of an electrolyte and is related to the total number of ionic charges in solution and considers the valence (charge) of each ion.

To count the valence, divide the compound into its positive and negative components, and then count the number of either the positive or the negative charges. For a given compound, the milliequivalents of cations equals that of anions. Some common compounds and their valences are listed in the table to the right. A comparison of valence and dissociation particles is presented in the Study Tip Gal on the next page. Remember, there are a lot of chelation drug interactions with "divalent" cations (calcium, magnesium and iron). Use that interaction to remember which compounds have a valence of 2.

COMPOUND	VALENCE
Ammonium chloride (NH_4Cl)	1
Potassium chloride (KCl)	
Potassium gluconate ($KC_6H_{11}O_7$)	
Sodium acetate ($NaC_2H_3O_2$)	
Sodium bicarbonate ($NaHCO_3$)	
Sodium chloride (NaCl)	
Calcium carbonate ($CaCO_3$)	2
Calcium chloride ($CaCl_2$)	
Ferrous sulfate ($FeSO_4$)	
Lithium carbonate (Li_2CO_3)	
Magnesium sulfate ($MgSO_4$)	

$$mEq = \frac{mg \times valence}{MW} \qquad \text{or} \qquad mEq = mmols \times valence$$



61. A 20 mL vial is labeled potassium chloride (2 mEq/mL). How many grams of potassium chloride (MW = 74.5 g/mol) are present? Round to the nearest hundredth.

$$20\ mL \times \frac{2\ mEq}{mL} = 40\ mEq\ KCl\ total$$

$$40\ mEq = \frac{mg \times 1}{74.5} = 2{,}980\ mg, \text{ which is } 2.98\ g$$

If asked to convert KCl liquid to tablets (or vice versa), use a simple proportion; KCl 10% = 20 mEq/15 mL (see Required Formulas Sheet). For example, if someone is using *Klor-Con* 20 mEq BID, the total daily dose is 40 mEq. Convert to KCl 10%, as follows:

$$\frac{40\ mEq}{X\ mL} = \frac{20\ mEq}{15\ mL}$$ X = 30 mL of KCl 10% liquid (15 mL PO BID) is equal to *Klor-Con* 40 mEq (20 mEq PO BID)

62. How many milliequivalents of potassium chloride are present in a 12 mL dose of a 10% (w/v) potassium chloride (MW = 74.5 g/mol) elixir? Round to 1 decimal place.

$$\frac{10\ g}{100\ mL} = \frac{X\ g}{12\ mL}$$ X = 1.2 g, or 1,200 mg

$$mEq = \frac{1{,}200\ mg \times 1}{74.5} = 16.1\ mEq$$

63. Calculate the milliequivalents of a standard ammonium chloride (MW = 53.5 g/mol) 21.4 mg/mL sterile solution in a 500 mL container.

$$\frac{21.4\ \text{mg}}{\text{mL}} \times 500\ \text{mL} = 10{,}700\ \text{mg}$$

$$\text{mEq} = \frac{10{,}700\ \text{mg} \times 1}{53.5} = 200\ \text{mEq}$$

---

64. How many milliequivalents of $MgSO_4$ (MW = 120.4 g/mol) are represented in 1 gram of anhydrous magnesium sulfate? Round to the nearest tenth.

$$\text{mEq} = \frac{1{,}000\ \text{mg} \times 2}{120.4} = 16.6\ \text{mEq}$$

---

65. How many milliequivalents of sodium are in a 50 mL vial of 8.4% sodium bicarbonate (MW = 84 g/mol)?

$$\frac{8.4\ \text{g}}{100\ \text{mL}} = \frac{X\ \text{g}}{50\ \text{mL}} \quad X = 4.2\ \text{g, or } 4{,}200\ \text{mg}$$

$$\text{mEq} = \frac{4{,}200\ \text{mg} \times 1}{84} = 50\ \text{mEq}$$

---

66. A 74-year-old male takes lithium carbonate (Li_2CO_3) 450 mg PO BID, but reports difficulty swallowing the capsules. How many milliliters of lithium citrate syrup provide an equivalent daily dose of lithium? Round to the nearest whole number. (MW of lithium carbonate = 74 g/mol)

The problem can be solved with the milliequivalent formula if the MW is provided. The valence of lithium carbonate is 2 (2 positively charged lithium ions and carbonate, which carries a negative 2 charge).

$$\text{mEq} = \frac{900\ \text{mg} \times 2}{74} = 24.324\ \text{mEq of Li ion per day}$$

Refer to the Required Formulas Sheet for the conversion between lithium salts:

$$\frac{24.324\ \text{mEq Li ion}}{X\ \text{mL}} = \frac{8\ \text{mEq Li ion}}{5\ \text{mL lithium citrate syrup}} \quad X = 15\ \text{mL of lithium citrate per day}$$

Alternative method:

$$\frac{900\ \text{mg } Li_2CO_3}{X\ \text{mEq}} = \frac{300\ \text{mg } Li_2CO_3}{8\ \text{mEq}} \quad X = 24\ \text{mEq Li ion per day}$$

$$\frac{24\ \text{mEq Li ion}}{X\ \text{mL}} = \frac{8\ \text{mEq Li ion}}{5\ \text{mL lithium citrate syrup}} \quad X = 15\ \text{mL of lithium citrate per day}$$

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CHAPTER 11

CALCULATIONS III: PARENTERAL & ENTERAL NUTRITION

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= Study Tip Gal

BACKGROUND

When a patient cannot eat enough to stay healthy, nutrition support may be required. Examples include patients with stroke, cancer, GI disorders (e.g., bowel obstruction, Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis) or patients in a coma. Enteral nutrition (EN) uses the GI tract to deliver all or part of a patient's caloric needs; examples include eating food orally or delivering a formula via a feeding tube into the stomach or intestine. When the GI tract is working, enteral nutrition is preferred; it is most physiologic, has fewer complications and is generally less expensive. Parenteral nutrition (PN), also referred to as total parenteral nutrition (TPN), delivers calories into a vein through a peripheral or central line. Parenteral nutrition can be used when the GI tract is not functioning, or in patients who cannot maintain nutritional status enterally.

CALORIE SOURCES

A calorie is a measurement of the energy, or heat, it takes to raise the temperature of 1 gram of water by 1°C. Calories are associated with nutrition because humans obtain energy from the food they consume orally or from EN/PN. Calories are provided by these 3 components: carbohydrates, fat and protein (called macronutrients).

A calorie is a very small unit, and these are therefore measured in kilocalories, or kcals, where 1,000 calories = 1 kcal. It is common to find the term "calories" used interchangeably for kcals. For example, the "Nutrition Facts" box on the side of a container of Honey Nut Cheerios® states that a ¾ cup serving of the cereal provides 110 Calories. Precisely, this is 110 kcals. Looking at the box, the word "Calories" is written with a capital "C" which is sometimes used to indicate kcals, versus a lower case "c." For pharmacy calculations, "calories" or "Calories" are meant to refer to kilocalories, or kcals.

PARENTERAL NUTRITION

Compared to EN, PN is more invasive, less physiologic and has a higher risk of complications (e.g., infection, thrombosis). PN may be indicated when the patient is not able to absorb adequate nutrition via the GI tract for > 5 days. Conditions that often require PN include bowel obstruction, ileus, severe diarrhea, radiation enteritis and untreatable malabsorption.

There are 2 types of PN admixtures. Both types contain sterile water for injection, electrolytes, vitamins and minerals.

- 2-in-1 formulations contain two macronutrients (dextrose and amino acids) in one container. Lipids are infused separately, if needed.
- 3-in-1 formulations contain three macronutrients (dextrose, amino acids and lipids) in one container. 3-in-1 formulations are also called total nutrient admixture (TNA) or "all-in-one" formulations.

PN admixtures are compounded sterile products (CSPs) and their preparation must meet USP Chapter 797 requirements. They are also classified as high-alert medications by the Institute for Safe Medication Practices (ISMP). Many large hospitals use automated compounding devices to combine the ingredients into a single container, but multi-chamber bags can be purchased for convenience. Two-chamber premixed PN products have an amino acid solution in one chamber and a dextrose solution in another chamber. The seal between the chambers is broken before administration to mix the solutions together. Three-chamber options (with lipid emulsion in the third chamber) are also available. *Clinimix* is one of the commonly used multi-chamber products. *Clinimix-E* products contain electrolytes.

If the PN is expected to be used short-term (< 1 week), peripheral administration may be possible, but has a high risk of phlebitis (inflammation of the vein) and vein damage. Central line placement allows for a higher

osmolarity and wider variation in pH. Common types of central lines include peripherally inserted central catheters ("PICC" lines), Hickman, Broviac, Groshong and others. Administration of PN requires a filter due to the risk of a precipitate (discussed later in the chapter).

Each patient's requirements for fluid, calories, protein, lipids, electrolytes, vitamins and trace elements will be determined. PN requires careful monitoring, including assessing the degree of glucose intolerance and the risk of refeeding syndrome, which is an intracellular loss of electrolytes, particularly phosphate, that causes serious complications.

DETERMINING FLUID NEEDS

Fluid requirements are determined first when designing a PN regimen. Enough fluid needs to be given to maintain adequate hydration, but not too much to cause accumulation. Daily fluid needs can be calculated using this formula:

When weight > 20 kg: 1,500 mL + (20 mL)(weight in kg* – 20)

**Total body weight (the patient's weight on the scale) is used for most PN calculations, unless the question specifies otherwise.*

Some institutions estimate adult fluid requirements using a general guideline of 30 – 40 mL/kg/day. The PN and fluid volume should be tailored to the patient. If the patient has problems with fluid accumulation (e.g., heart failure, renal dysfunction), the amount of fluid should be reduced. Fluid volume from medications, including intravenous piggybacks, should be included in the calculation of the overall volume the patient is receiving.

1. **GG is a 57-year-old female admitted to the hospital with bowel obstruction. She will be NPO for the next 5 – 7 days. The decision was made to start PN therapy. She weighs 65 kg. Her SCr is 1.3 mg/dL. Calculate GG's daily fluid requirements.**

   1,500 mL + (20 mL) (65 - 20) = 2,400 mL/day

2. **A 76-year-old, 154-pound patient is NPO and needs hydration. She is afebrile and does not have heart failure, renal disease or ascites. What volume of fluid should the patient receive per day?**

   1,500 mL + (20 mL) (70 - 20) = 2,500 mL/day

DETERMINING CALORIC NEEDS

BASAL ENERGY EXPENDITURE

The basal energy expenditure (BEE), otherwise referred to as the basal metabolic rate (BMR), is the energy expenditure in the resting state, exclusive of eating and activity. It is estimated differently in male and female adults using the Harris-Benedict equations below. Most pharmacists do not memorize these equations; they will likely be provided on the exam.

BEE (males): 66.47 + 13.75 (weight in kg*) + 5 (height in cm) – 6.76 (age in years)

BEE (females): 655.1 + 9.6 (weight in kg*) + 1.85 (height in cm) – 4.68 (age in years)

**Total body weight (the patient's weight on the scale) is used for most PN calculations, unless the question specifies otherwise.*

TOTAL ENERGY EXPENDITURE

Total energy expenditure (TEE; or total daily expenditure, TDE) is a measure of BEE plus excess metabolic demands as a result of stress, the thermal effects of feeding and energy expenditure from activity. Once the BEE is calculated, calculate the TEE by taking the BEE calories and multiplying by the appropriate activity factor and stress factor. This will increase the calories required. Energy requirements are increased 12% with each degree of fever over 37°C.

TEE = BEE × activity factor × stress factor

The activity factor is either 1.2 if confined to bed (non-ambulatory), or 1.3 if out of bed (ambulatory). Commonly used stress factors are listed in the table. The formula for BEE and patient-specific stress factors are likely to be provided if needed on the exam.

STATE OF STRESS	STRESS FACTOR
Minor surgery	1.2
Infection	1.4
Major trauma, sepsis, burns up to 30% BSA	1.5
Burns over 30% BSA	1.5–2

---

3. Using the Harris-Benedict equation, calculate the basal energy expenditure for a 66-year-old male with major trauma (stress factor 1.5). He weighs 174 pounds and is 5'10". Activity factor is 1.2. Round to the nearest whole number.

Height = 70 inches × 2.54 cm/inch = 177.8 cm. Weight = 174 pounds × 1 kg/2.2 pounds = 79.0909 kg.

BEE (males): 66.47 + 13.75 (weight in kg) + 5 (height in cm) – 6.76 (age in years)

BEE = 66.47 + (13.75 x 79.0909) + (5 x 177.8) - (6.76 x 66)

BEE = 66.47 + 1,087.5 + 889 - 446.16 = 1,596.81, or 1,597 kcal/day

The stress factor is not needed in this calculation, because you were asked to calculate BEE only.

---

4. Calculate the total energy expenditure for a major trauma patient (stress factor is 1.5, activity factor is 1.2) who is a 66-year-old male, weighing 174 pounds and measuring 5'10" in height. (Use the BEE calculated from the patient in the previous problem.) Round to the nearest whole number.

TEE = BEE × activity factor × stress factor. BEE was calculated above.

TEE = 1,597 kcal/day x 1.2 x 1.5 = 2,875 kcal/day

5. **A 25-year-old female is recovering in the surgical intensive care unit after major trauma. She is 122 pounds, 5'7", and has mild renal impairment. Calculate her BEE using the Harris-Benedict equation and her TEE (stress factor = 1.7 and activity factor = 1.2). Round each to the nearest whole number.**

Height = 67 inches × 2.54 cm/inch = 170.18 cm. Weight = 122 pounds × 1 kg/2.2 pounds = 55.4545 kg.

BEE (females): 655.1 + 9.6 (weight in kg) + 1.85 (height in cm) – 4.68 (age in years)

BEE = 655.1 + (9.6 × 55.4545) + (1.85 × 170.18) - (4.68 × 25)

BEE = 655.1 + 532.3632 + 314.833 - 117 = 1,385.2962, or 1,385 kcal/day

TEE = BEE × activity factor × stress factor

TEE = 1,385 kcal/day × 1.2 × 1.7 = 2,825 kcal/day

Despite the availability of BEE and TEE formulas, they can lead to overestimation of caloric needs in clinical practice. Guidelines suggest that 12 – 25 kcal/kg/day is appropriate for adults in the first 7 – 10 days of an ICU admission.

Once the total caloric needs are determined, the calories provided from each macronutrient can be calculated using the conversions shown in the Study Tip Gal below.

CALORIES PROVIDED FROM MACRONUTRIENTS

USUAL DIET*			EN FORMULAS*		PN FORMULAS	
Carbs	Bread, Rice....	4 kcal/ gram	Corn syrup solids, cornstarch, sucrose....	Premixed solutions that contain carbohydrates, fat and protein. See Enteral Nutrition at the end of this chapter. Examples of EN formulas: *Ensure, Osmolite, Jevity, Glucerna*	Dextrose Monohydrate	3.4 kcal/gram
					Glycerol/Glycerin**	4.3 kcal/gram
Fat	Butter, Oil....	9 kcal/ gram	Borage oil, canola oil, corn oil....		Injectable Lipid Emulsion (ILE) 10%	1.1 kcal/mL
					Injectable Lipid Emulsion (ILE) 20% *(Intralipid, Smoflipid)*	2 kcal/mL
					Injectable Lipid Emulsion (ILE) 30%	3 kcal/mL
Protein	Fish, Meat....	4 kcal/ gram	Casein, soy, whey....		Amino Acid Solutions *(Aminosyn, FreAmine,* others)	4 kcal/gram

**The diet and enteral formula components shown are common examples; there are others.*
***Glycerol may be used to decrease hyperglycemia; more commonly, the dextrose load is decreased or the insulin dose is increased.*

PROTEIN

Protein is used either to repair or build muscle cells or as a source of energy. Protein in enteral intake is present in various forms, and in PN as the constituent amino acids. Protein from food, enteral nutrition formulas or parenteral amino acid solutions provides 4 kcal/gram.

The typical protein requirement for a non-stressed, ambulatory patient is 0.8 – 1 g/kg/day. The weight to use to calculate the protein requirement will likely be specified (if needed) in an exam scenario. Critically ill patients are catabolic (protein breakdown occurs faster than synthesis); the more severely ill, the greater the protein requirements will be. In patients with a high degree of metabolic stress the protein requirements can be as high as 2 g/kg/day.

CONDITION	PROTEIN REQUIREMENTS
Ambulatory, non-hospitalized (non-stressed)	0.8–1 g/kg/day
Hospitalized or malnourished	1.2–2 g/kg/day

---

6. **MK is a 62-year-old female who has been admitted with enteritis and pneumonia. She has a history of Crohn's disease and COPD. Her IBW is 54.7 kg. The staff gastroenterologist has ordered PN therapy with 1.5 g/kg IBW/day of protein. How many grams of protein will MK receive per day? Round to the nearest whole number.**

54.7 kg x 1.5 g/kg IBW/day = 82 g protein/day

---

7. **PP is a 46-year-old male who weighs 207 pounds. He is admitted for bowel resection surgery. Post surgery, he is to be started on PN therapy. The physician wants the patient to receive 1.3 g/kg/day of protein. Calculate his protein requirement. Round to the nearest whole number.**

First, convert pounds to kg: 207 pounds × 1 kg/2.2 pounds = 94.1 kg.

Then, calculate the protein requirement.

94.1 kg x 1.3 g/kg/day = 122 g protein/day

NITROGEN BALANCE

GRAMS OF NITROGEN FROM PROTEIN

Nitrogen is released during protein catabolism and is mainly excreted as urea in the urine. Nitrogen balance is the difference between the body's nitrogen gains and losses. While grams of protein are calculated in a nutritional plan, grams of nitrogen are used as an expression of the amount of protein received by the patient. There is 1 g of nitrogen (N) for each 6.25 g of protein. To calculate the grams of nitrogen in a certain weight of protein, divide the protein grams by 6.25.

$$\text{Nitrogen intake} = \frac{\text{grams of protein intake}}{6.25}$$

---

8. **A patient is receiving PN containing 540 mL of 12.5% amino acids per day. How many grams of nitrogen is the patient receiving? Round to the nearest tenth.**

$$\frac{12.5\text{ g}}{100\text{ mL}} = \frac{X\text{ g}}{540\text{ mL}} \quad X = 67.5\text{ g of protein}$$

$$\frac{67.5\text{ g of protein}}{6.25} = 10.8\text{ g of nitrogen}$$

NON-PROTEIN CALORIES TO NITROGEN RATIO

Non-protein calories (NPC) refer to the calories a patient receives from dextrose and lipids only. The non-protein calorie to nitrogen ratio (NPC:N) is used to determine if the patient's diet (i.e., EN or PN) is providing sufficient protein to maintain muscle mass. It is calculated as follows:

- First, calculate the grams of nitrogen supplied per day (1 g N = 6.25 g of protein).
- Then, divide the total non-protein calories (dextrose + lipids) by the grams of nitrogen.

Desirable NPC:N ratios are:

- 80:1 in the most severely stressed patients
- 100:1 in severely stressed patients
- 150:1 in an unstressed patient

---

9. A patient is receiving PN containing 480 mL of dextrose 50% and 50 grams of amino acids plus electrolytes. Calculate the non-protein calories to nitrogen ratio for this patient.

First, calculate the nitrogen intake.

$$\text{Nitrogen} = \frac{50 \text{ g of protein}}{6.25} = 8 \text{ g}$$

Next, calculate the non-protein calories.

$$\frac{50 \text{ g dextrose}}{100 \text{ mL}} = \frac{X \text{ g}}{480 \text{ mL}} \quad X = 240 \text{ g dextrose}$$

$$240 \text{ g dextrose} \times \frac{3.4 \text{ kcal dextrose}}{1 \text{ g}} = 816 \text{ kcal of dextrose}$$

Then, set up the NPC:N ratio.

NPC:N ratio is 816:8, or 102:1

AMINO ACID CALCULATIONS

Amino acids are the protein source in PN. Amino acids come in stock preparations of 5%, 8.5%, 10%, 15% and others. They all provide 4 kcal/gram. Branded amino acid solutions commonly used for PN include *Aminosyn, FreAmine, Travasol, TrophAmine* and *Clinisol*.

---

10. If the pharmacy stocks *Aminosyn* 8.5%, how many milliliters will be needed to provide 108 grams of protein? Round to the nearest whole number.

$$\frac{8.5 \text{ g}}{100 \text{ mL}} = \frac{108 \text{ g}}{X \text{ mL}} \quad X = 1{,}270.58, \text{ or } 1{,}271 \text{ mL}$$

---

11. How many calories are provided by 108 grams of protein?

$$\frac{4 \text{ kcal}}{\text{g}} \times 108 \text{ g} = 432 \text{ kcal of protein}$$

12. The pharmacy stocks *FreAmine* 10%. A patient requires 122 grams of protein per day. How many milliliters of *FreAmine* will the patient need?

$$\frac{10\ g}{100\ mL} = \frac{122\ g}{X\ mL} \quad X = 1{,}220\ mL$$

13. JR is a 55-year-old male (weight 189 pounds) who is confined to bed (activity factor 1.2) due to his current infection (stress factor 1.5). JR requires 1.4 g/kg/day of protein and the pharmacy stocks *Aminosyn* 8.5%. Calculate the amount of *Aminosyn*, in milliliters, JR should receive. Round to the nearest whole number.

First, convert weight to kg: 189 pounds × 1 kg/2.2 pounds = 85.90 kg.

Next, calculate the protein requirement: 1.4 g/kg/day × 85.9090 kg = 120.27 g/day.

Then, calculate the amount of *Aminosyn* (mL) needed. Note that the activity factor and stress factor are not required to calculate the protein requirement.

$$\frac{8.5\ g}{100\ mL} = \frac{120.27\ g}{X\ mL} \quad X = 1{,}414.97, \text{ or } 1{,}415\ mL$$

14. JR is receiving 97 grams of protein in an *Aminosyn* 8.5% solution on day 8 of his hospitalization. How many calories are provided by this amount of protein?

$$\frac{4\ kcal}{g} \times 97\ g = 388\ kcal \text{ of protein}$$

15. A PN order is written to include 800 mL of 10% amino acid solution. The pharmacy only has 15% amino acid solution in stock. Using the 15% amino acid solution instead, how many milliliters should be added to the PN bag? Round to the nearest whole number.

First, calculate the grams of protein that would be provided with the 10% solution.

$$\frac{10\ g}{100\ mL} = \frac{X\ g}{800\ mL} \quad X = 80\ g$$

Next, calculate how much of the 15% amino acid solution will supply 80 grams of protein.

$$\frac{15\ g}{100\ mL} = \frac{80\ g}{X\ mL} \quad X = 533\ mL$$

CARBOHYDRATES

Glucose is the primary energy source. Unless a patient purchases glucose tablets or gel, carbohydrates are consumed as simple sugars, such as fruit juice, or complex "starchy" sugars, such as legumes and grains. These are hydrolyzed by the gut into the monosaccharides fructose, galactose and glucose, which are absorbed. The liver converts the first two into glucose, and excess glucose is stored as glycogen.

Carbohydrates from food or in enteral nutrition formulas provide 4 kcal/gram. In PN, dextrose monohydrate provides the carbohydrate source. This is the isomer of glucose (D-glucose) which can be metabolized for energy. The dextrose in PN provides 3.4 kcal/gram. Occasionally, glycerol is used as an alternative to dextrose in patients with impaired insulin secretion. Glycerol provides 4.3 kcal/gram and comes premixed with amino acids.

The usual distribution of non-protein calories is 70 – 85% as carbohydrate (dextrose) and 15 – 30% as fat (lipids). Dextrose comes in concentrations of 5%, 10%, 20%, 30%, 50%, 70% and others; higher concentrations are used for PN. When calculating the dextrose, do not exceed 4 mg/kg/min (some use 7 g/kg/day). These are conservative estimates of the maximum amount of dextrose that the liver can handle.

---

16. Using D50W, how many milliliters are required to fulfill a PN order for 405 grams of dextrose?

$$\frac{50\ g}{100\ mL} = \frac{405\ g}{X\ mL} = 810\ mL$$

---

17. DF, a 44-year-old male, is receiving 1,235 mL of D30W, 1,010 mL of *FreAmine* 8.5%, 200 mL of *Intralipid* 20% and 50 mL of electrolytes/minerals in his PN. How many calories from dextrose is DF receiving from the PN? Round to the nearest whole number.

$$\frac{30\ g}{100\ mL} \times \frac{1{,}235\ mL}{day} \times \frac{3.4\ kcal}{g} = 1{,}260\ kcal/day$$

---

18. A pharmacist mixed 200 mL D20% with 100 mL D5%. What is the percentage strength of dextrose in the final bag?

The 200 mL bag has 40 g of dextrose (20 g/100 mL × 200 mL).

The 100 mL bag has 5 g of dextrose. There are a total of 45 g of dextrose in the bag.

$$\frac{45\ g}{300\ mL} = \frac{X\ g}{100\ mL}$$ X = 15 g; the percentage strength is 15%

---

19. If a 50% dextrose injection provides 170 kcal in each 100 mL, how many milliliters of a 70% dextrose injection would provide the same caloric value? Round to the nearest tenth.

There are several ways to solve this problem. Option 1:

$$\frac{70\ g}{100\ mL} = \frac{50\ g}{X\ mL} = 71.4\ mL$$

Option 2:

$$\frac{100\ mL}{70\ g} \times \frac{1\ g}{3.4\ kcal} \times 170\ kcal = 71.4\ mL$$

Option 3: since the calories are from 50% dextrose and the pharmacist is using 70% dextrose, the Q1C1 (dilution and concentration) method can be used (see the Calculations II chapter):

$$100\ mL \times 50\% = Q2 \times 70\%$$

$$Q2 = 71.4\ mL$$

---

20. AH is receiving 640 mL of D50W in her PN. How many calories does this provide?

$$\frac{50\ g}{100\ mL} \times \frac{640\ mL}{day} \times \frac{3.4\ kcal}{g} = 1{,}088\ kcal$$

21. A PN order is written for 500 mL of 50% dextrose. The pharmacy only has D70W in stock. How many milliliters of D70W should be added to the PN bag? Round to the nearest whole number.

First, calculate the grams of dextrose needed for the PN as written.

$$\frac{50\ g}{100\ mL} = \frac{X\ g}{500\ mL} \qquad X = 250\ g$$

Next, calculate how much of the 70% dextrose solution provides 250 grams of dextrose.

$$\frac{70\ g}{100\ mL} = \frac{250\ g}{X\ mL} \qquad X = 357\ mL\ of\ D70W$$

FAT

Fats, or lipids, are an essential component of cell membranes, serve as a solvent for fat-soluble vitamins, and play a role in hormone production and activity, as well as in cell signaling. In food and EN formulas, fat is provided as four types: saturated, *trans*, monounsaturated and polyunsaturated. Each of these provides 9 kcal/gram. In PN, injectable lipid emulsion (ILE) is the fat source. Fat calories in PN are not measured in kcal/gram; they are measured in kcal/mL due to the caloric contribution provided by the egg phospholipid and glycerol components in the ILE. A 10% ILE provides 1.1 kcal/mL, 20% provides 2 kcal/mL and 30% provides 3 kcal/mL.

Non-protein calories are comprised of 70 – 85% carbohydrate (dextrose) and 15 – 30% fat (lipids). Lipids are available as 10%, 20% or 30% emulsions, with brand names *Intralipid* (all concentrations) and *Smoflipid* (20% only); *Smoflipid* contains 4 oils, while traditional ILE contains only soybean oil, so they are not interchangeable. ISMP has received numerous reports of mix-ups between them.

Lipids do not need to be given daily; if a patient has high triglycerides, lipid administration may be reduced to three times per week or once weekly. If lipids are given once weekly, divide the total calories by 7 to determine the daily amount of fat the patient receives. Due to infection risk, the recommended hang time limit for ILE is 12 hours when infused alone. However, an admixture containing fat emulsion, such as a TNA, may be administered over 24 hours. Lipid emulsions cannot be filtered through 0.22 micron filters; 1.2 micron filters are commonly used for lipids.

Some medications are formulated in a lipid emulsion (propofol and clevidipine) that provides fat calories. If a patient is receiving PN along with one of these medications, the calorie contribution from the medication must be considered. Refer to the Acute & Critical Care Medicine and Hypertension chapters for further discussion.

22. A patient is receiving 500 mL of 10% lipids. How many calories is the patient receiving from the lipids? Round to the nearest whole number.

$$\frac{1.1\ kcal}{mL} = \frac{X\ kcal}{500\ mL} \qquad X = 550\ kcal$$

23. The total energy expenditure (TEE) for a critically ill patient is 2,435 kcal/day. The patient is receiving 1,446 kcal from dextrose and 810 kcal from protein. In this critical care unit, clinicians do not include protein calories in the TEE estimation. How many kcal should be provided by the lipids?

As stated in the problem, at this institution TEE refers to the non-protein calories.

2,435 kcal (total non-protein) – 1,446 kcal (dextrose) = 989 kcal remaining from lipids

24. Using 20% *Smoflipid*, how many milliliters are required to meet 989 calories? Round to the nearest whole number.

$$\frac{2 \text{ kcal}}{\text{mL}} = \frac{989 \text{ kcal}}{\text{X mL}} \quad \text{X} = 495 \text{ mL}$$

25. A patient is receiving 660 mL of 10% *Intralipid* on Saturdays along with his normal daily PN therapy of 1,420 mL of D20W, 450 mL *Aminosyn* 15%, and 30 mL of electrolytes. What is the daily amount of calories provided by the lipids? Round to the nearest whole number.

$$\frac{1.1 \text{ kcal}}{\text{mL}} = \frac{\text{X kcal}}{660 \text{ mL}} \quad \text{X} = 726 \text{ kcal/week. Divide by 7 to get kcal/day} = 104 \text{ kcal/day}$$

26. A patient is receiving 180 mL of 30% lipids. How many calories is the patient receiving from the lipids?

$$\frac{3 \text{ kcal}}{\text{mL}} = \frac{\text{X kcal}}{180 \text{ mL}} \quad \text{X} = 540 \text{ kcal}$$

27. A PN order calls for 475 calories to be provided by lipids. The pharmacy has 10% lipid emulsion in stock. How many milliliters should be administered to the patient? Round to the nearest whole number.

$$\frac{1.1 \text{ kcal}}{\text{mL}} = \frac{475 \text{ kcal}}{\text{X mL}} \quad \text{X} = 432 \text{ mL}$$

ELECTROLYTES

Electrolytes in the PN must be individualized to the patient's needs. Electrolytes include sodium, potassium, phosphate, chloride and calcium. A patient may need more or less of an electrolyte based on their conditions (e.g., renal disease).

SODIUM

Sodium is the principal extracellular cation. Sodium may need to be reduced in renal dysfunction or cardiovascular disease, including hypertension. Sodium chloride (NaCl) comes in many concentrations, such as 0.9% (normal saline, or NS), 0.45% (½NS) and others. Sodium chloride 23.4% is used for PN preparation and contains 4 mEq/mL of sodium. Hypertonic saline (greater than 0.9%) is dangerous if used incorrectly and is discussed in the Medication Safety & Quality Improvement chapter.

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Sodium can be added to PN as either sodium chloride, sodium acetate, sodium phosphate or a combination of these. If acidosis is present, sodium acetate should be used; sodium acetate is converted to sodium bicarbonate and may help correct the acidosis.

28. The pharmacist is going to add 80 mEq of sodium to the PN; half will be given as sodium acetate (2 mEq/mL) and half as sodium chloride (4 mEq/mL). How many milliliters of sodium chloride will be needed?

40 mEq will be provided by the NaCl.

$$\frac{4\ \text{mEq}}{\text{mL}} = \frac{40\ \text{mEq}}{X\ \text{mL}} \qquad X = 10\ \text{mL}$$

29. The pharmacist is making PN that needs to contain 80 mEq of sodium and 45 mEq of acetate. The available pharmacy stock solutions include sodium chloride (4 mEq/mL of sodium) and sodium acetate (2 mEq/mL of sodium). The final volume of the PN will be 2.5 liters to be infused at 100 mL/hr. What quantity, in milliliters, of each stock solution should be added to the PN to meet the requirements? Round to the nearest hundredth.

First, calculate the volume of sodium acetate needed (since acetate can only be provided by sodium acetate and sodium will also be provided by this solution).

$$\frac{2\ \text{mEq}}{\text{mL}} = \frac{45\ \text{mEq}}{X\ \text{mL}} \qquad X = 22.5\ \text{mL of sodium acetate}$$

Next, determine how many mEq of sodium are supplied by 22.5 mL sodium acetate.

$$\frac{2\ \text{mEq}}{\text{mL}} \times 22.5\ \text{mL sodium acetate} = 45\ \text{mEq of sodium}$$

So, 45 mEq (22.5 mL) of sodium acetate supplies 45 mEq of acetate and 45 mEq of sodium. How many mEq of sodium are left to be provided by the sodium chloride?

80 mEq Na total − 45 mEq Na from Na Acetate = 35 mEq of sodium still needed from NaCl

Calculate the volume of sodium chloride that will supply the remaining sodium (35 mEq).

$$\frac{4\ \text{mEq}}{\text{mL}} = \frac{35\ \text{mEq}}{X\ \text{mL}} \qquad X = 8.75\ \text{mL of sodium chloride}$$

30. A 2 liter PN solution is to contain 60 mEq of sodium and 30 mEq of acetate. The pharmacy has in stock sodium chloride (4 mEq/mL) and sodium acetate (2 mEq/mL). What quantity, in milliliters, of each solution should be added to the PN? Round to the nearest tenth.

First, calculate the amount of sodium acetate needed.

$$\frac{2\ \text{mEq}}{\text{mL}} = \frac{30\ \text{mEq}}{X\ \text{mL}} \qquad X = 15\ \text{mL of sodium acetate}$$

This amount (15 mL of sodium acetate) supplies 30 mEq of sodium (15 mL × 2 mEq/mL = 30 mEq). The additional amount of sodium required is 30 mEq from NaCl (60 mEq – 30 mEq).

Now, calculate the amount of sodium chloride needed.

$$\frac{4\ \text{mEq}}{\text{mL}} = \frac{30\ \text{mEq}}{X\ \text{mL}} \qquad X = 7.5\ \text{mL of NaCl}$$

POTASSIUM

Potassium is the principal intracellular cation. Potassium may need to be reduced in renal or cardiovascular disease. Potassium can be provided by potassium chloride (KCl), potassium phosphate (KPhos, KPO4), potassium acetate or a combination of these. The normal range for serum potassium is 3.5 – 5 mEq/L.

PHOSPHATE

Phosphorus (or phosphate, PO4) is present in DNA, cell membranes and ATP. It acts as an acid-base buffer and is vital in bone metabolism. Phosphate can be provided by sodium phosphate (NaPO4) or potassium phosphate (KPhos, KPO4). The two forms do not provide equivalent amounts of phosphate. The PN order should be written in mmol of phosphate, followed by the type of salt form (potassium or sodium). Phosphate will often need to be reduced in renal disease.

31. The pharmacist has calculated that a patient requires 30 mmol of phosphate and 80 mEq of potassium. The pharmacy has stock solutions of potassium phosphate (3 mmol of phosphate with 4.4 mEq of potassium/mL) and potassium chloride (2 mEq K/mL). How many milliliters each of potassium phosphate and potassium chloride will be required to meet the patient's needs?

First, calculate the volume of potassium phosphate required (since phosphate can only be provided by KPO4 and potassium will also be provided by this solution).

$$\frac{3 \text{ mmol phosphate}}{\text{mL}} = \frac{30 \text{ mmol phosphate}}{\text{X mL}} \qquad \text{X} = 10 \text{ mL KPO4}$$

Each mL of the potassium phosphate (KPO4) supplies 4.4 mEq of potassium. Calculate the amount of potassium the patient will receive from the 10 mL of KPO4.

10 mL × 4.4 mEq/mL = 44 mEq potassium from KPO4

The remaining potassium will be provided by KCl.

80 mEq K required - 44 mEq K (from KPO4) = 36 mEq to be obtained from KCl

$$\frac{2 \text{ mEq K}}{\text{mL}} = \frac{36 \text{ mEq K}}{\text{X mL}} \qquad \text{X} = 18 \text{ mL KCl}$$

The patient requires 10 mL of potassium phosphate and 18 mL of potassium chloride.

CALCIUM

Calcium is important for many functions, including cardiac conduction, muscle contraction and bone homeostasis. The normal serum calcium level is 8.5 – 10.5 mg/dL. Almost half of serum calcium is bound to albumin. Low albumin will lead to a measured serum calcium concentration that is falsely low. If albumin is low (< 3.5 g/dL), the calcium level must be corrected with the equation below prior to determining the calcium needs in the PN or providing calcium replacement in any manner:

$$Ca_{corrected}\ (mg/dL) = calcium_{reported(serum)} + [(4.0 - albumin) \times (0.8)]\ \dagger$$

†Use serum calcium in mg/dL and albumin in g/dL (standard units in the U.S.) in the corrected calcium formula

32. Calculate the corrected calcium value for a patient with the following reported lab values:

LAB	REFERENCE RANGE	RESULT
Calcium (mg/dL)	8.5–10.5	7.6
Albumin (g/dL)	3.5–5	1.5

$$Ca_{corrected} = 7.6 + [(4.0 - 1.5) \times (0.8)] = 9.6 \text{ mg/dL}$$

The corrected calcium provides a more accurate estimate of the patient's true serum calcium level (i.e., what it would be if the albumin was normal). In this example, the patient's corrected calcium is within the reference range for the lab.

33. A patient is to receive 8 mEq of calcium. The pharmacy has calcium gluconate 10% in stock which provides 0.465 mEq/mL. How many milliliters of calcium gluconate should be added to the PN? Round to the nearest whole number.

$$8 \text{ mEq Ca} \times \frac{1 \text{ mL}}{0.465 \text{ mEq Ca}} = 17.2, \text{ or } 17 \text{ mL calcium gluconate}$$

CALCIUM AND PHOSPHATE SOLUBILITY

Phosphate and calcium can bind together and precipitate in PN, which can cause a potentially fatal pulmonary embolus. The following steps can help reduce the risk of a calcium-phosphate precipitation in PN:

- Choose calcium gluconate over calcium chloride ($CaCl_2$) because it has a lower risk of precipitation with phosphates. Calcium gluconate has a lower dissociation constant than calcium chloride, leaving less free calcium available in solution to bind phosphates.
- Add phosphate first (after the dextrose and amino acids), followed by other PN components, agitate the solution, then add calcium near the end to take advantage of the maximum volume of the PN formulation.
- The calcium and phosphate added together (units must be the same) should not exceed 45 mEq/L.
  - Automated PN compounding software may use a calcium phosphate solubility curve to assess risk. Generally, when calcium and phosphate concentrations are plotted on the X- and Y-axis of the graph, the lines should meet below the curve. Values that plot above the curve indicate a precipitation risk.
- Maintain a proper pH (lower pH = less risk of precipitation) and refrigerate the bag once prepared. When temperature increases, more calcium and phosphate dissociate in solution and precipitation risk increases.

34. A patient is receiving 30 mmol of phosphate and 8 mEq of calcium. The volume of the PN is 2,000 mL. There are 2 mEq PO4/mmol. Confirm that the sum of the calcium and phosphorus does not exceed 45 mEq/L.

First, calculate the mEq of phosphate.

$$\frac{2 \text{ mEq PO4}}{\text{mmol}} \times 30 \text{ mmol PO4} = 60 \text{ mEq phosphate}$$

Then, add the phosphate and calcium mEq together. 60 mEq phosphate + 8 mEq calcium = 68 mEq.

Read the question again. Has it been answered? The volume of the PN is 2,000 mL, or 2 L. Calculate the mEq per liter.

68 mEq/2 L = 34 mEq/L, which is less than 45 mEq/L.

OTHER ADDITIVES

Multivitamins and trace elements are usually added to the PN formula. Insulin and histamine-2 receptor antagonists (H2RAs) are occasionally added. Adding any other IV medications to the PN is generally discouraged, because the entire PN would be wasted if a medication was discontinued or changed during the day.

MULTIVITAMINS

There are 4 fat-soluble vitamins (A, D, E, K) and 9 water-soluble vitamins (thiamine, riboflavin, niacin, pantothenic acid, pyridoxine, ascorbic acid, folic acid, cyanocobalamin, biotin) in the standard MVI-13 mixture. The MVI-12 mixture does not contain vitamin K since certain patients may need less or more of this vitamin. If a patient on PN therapy is taking warfarin, the INR must be monitored.

TRACE ELEMENTS

The standard mix includes zinc, copper, chromium and manganese (and possibly selenium). Manganese and copper should be withheld in severe liver disease. Chromium, molybdenum and selenium should be withheld in severe renal disease. Iron is not routinely given in PN.

INSULIN

Because of the large carbohydrate component of PN, insulin may be required (even in patients without diabetes). Half the sliding scale requirement from the previous day (or less) can be added to the PN as regular insulin to safely control blood glucose. This can be supplemented by SC insulin as needed. PN formulas are often titrated on and off (e.g., started at less than the goal rate and not abruptly stopped) to facilitate physiologic glucose regulation.

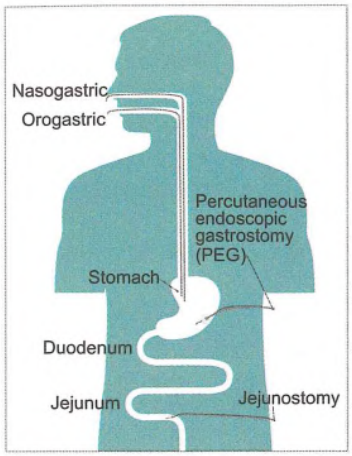
ENTERAL NUTRITION

EN provides nutrients via the GI tract. Several advantages of EN over PN include lower cost, it uses the gut (which prevents atrophy and other problems) and it has a lower risk of complications (less infections, less hyperglycemia, reduced risk of cholelithiasis and cholestasis). EN is sometimes administered through a feeding tube (see section on following page).

Example EN formulas include *Ensure, Osmolite, Jevity, Glucerna, Novasource* and many others. Some are specialized for certain types of patients (e.g., *Nepro* is a renal formula, *Glucerna* is for patients with diabetes), and some can be purchased OTC for meal replacement or those needing additional calories.

FEEDING TUBES

- A tube from the nose to the stomach is called a nasogastric (NG), or nasoenteral, tube.
- A tube that goes through the skin into the stomach is called a gastrostomy, or percutaneous endoscopic gastrostomy (PEG or G) tube.
- A tube into the small intestine is called a jejunostomy, or percutaneous endoscopic jejunostomy (PEJ or J) tube.



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NG tubes are used frequently, primarily for short-term enteral nutrition administration. For longer-term, or if the stomach cannot be used, tubes are placed further down the GI tract. Tube feedings can range from providing adjunctive support to providing complete nutrition support.

The most common risk associated with tube feeding is aspiration, which can lead to pneumonia. Tube feeds do not, by themselves, provide enough water. Water is given in addition to the tube feeds. If fluid intake is inadequate, it will be uncomfortable for the patient and put them at risk for complications, including hypernatremia.

DRUG ADMINISTRATION VIA FEEDING TUBES

Drug administration through a feeding tube is an important part of patient care but can be prone to errors. Medications should never be added directly to the EN formula, and oral dosage forms (solid and liquid) are not always compatible with tube administration. Drug physical and chemical changes (e.g., from crushing and diluting an oral tablet), alterations in absorption, or interactions with nutrients (see below) can reduce the effect or increase the toxicity of a drug. Additionally, improper administration can cause blockage of the feeding tube. It is prudent to always consult package labeling for product-specific information, but in general, the following types of drugs should not be crushed and administered via a feeding tube:

- Enteric-coated products
- Delayed- or extended-release products
- Sublingual or buccal formulations
- Hazardous drugs (e.g., chemotherapeutics, hormones, teratogens)

DRUG-NUTRIENT INTERACTIONS

The general rule for preventing drug/enteral feeding interactions is to hold the feedings 1 hour before and 1 – 2 hours after drug administration.

- Warfarin: many enteral products bind warfarin, resulting in low INRs and the need for dose adjustments. Hold tube feeds one hour before and one hour after warfarin administration. EN formulas contain varying amounts of vitamin K, which can complicate warfarin dosing in some patients.
- Tetracyclines, quinolones and levothyroxine: will chelate with polyvalent cations, including calcium, magnesium and iron, which reduces drug bioavailability; separate from tube feeds.
- Ciprofloxacin: the oral suspension is not compatible with tube feeds because the oil-based suspension adheres to the tube. Immediate-release tablets are used instead; crush and mix with water, and flush the line with water before and after administration.
- Phenytoin *(Dilantin* suspension*)*: levels are reduced when the drug binds to the feeding solution, leading to less free drug availability and subtherapeutic levels; separate from tube feeds by 2 hours.

PATIENT CASE (FOR QUESTIONS 35 –37)

WT is a patient starting enteral nutrition therapy. She has a past medical history significant for type 2 diabetes. She will be started on *Glucerna* ready-to-drink vanilla shakes. See the Nutrition Facts label provided.

35. What percent of calories will WT receive from the protein component? Round to the nearest whole number.

First, calculate the amount of calories provided by the protein component.

$$19.6 \text{ g protein} \times \frac{4 \text{ kcal}}{\text{g}} = 78.4 \text{ kcal}$$

Next, find the percentage of protein calories.

$$\frac{78.4 \text{ kcal}}{356 \text{ kcal}} \times 100 = 22\%$$

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size	8 fl oz (237 mL)
Amount Per Serving Calories	356 kcal
Total Fat	17.8 g
Protein	19.6 g
Total Carbohydrate	31.5 g
Dietary Fiber	3.8 g
L-Carnitine	51 mg
Taurine	40 mg
m-Inositol	205 mg
Vitamin A	
Viamin C	
Iron	

36. How many calories will WT receive from the fat component of one (8 fl oz) shake? Round to the nearest whole number.

$$17.8 \text{ g} \times \frac{9 \text{ kcal}}{\text{g}} = 160.2, \text{ or } 160 \text{ kcal}$$

37. What percent of calories are derived from the fat component? Round to the nearest whole number.

$$\frac{160.2 \text{ kcal}}{356 \text{ kcal}} \times 100 = 45\%$$

PATIENT CASE (FOR QUESTIONS 38 – 40)

JB is a patient receiving *Osmolite* (a high-protein, low-residue enteral nutrition formula) through a PEG tube. See the Nutrition Facts label provided.

38. How many calories will JB receive from the carbohydrate component if he receives 4 fl oz? Round to the nearest whole number.

First, calculate the total calories from carbohydrates in one carton (8 fl oz).

$$37.4 \text{ g carbohydrate} \times \frac{4 \text{ kcal}}{\text{g}} = 149.6 \text{ kcal from 8 fl oz}$$

The question asks about calories in 4 fl oz (½ carton).

$$\frac{149.6 \text{ kcal}}{2} = 74.8, \text{ or } 75 \text{ kcal from 4 fl oz}$$

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size	8 fl oz (237 mL)
Amount Per Serving Calories	285 kcal
Total Fat	9.2 g
Protein	13.2 g
Total Carbohydrate	37.4 g
L-Carnitine	36 mg
Taurine	36 mg
Vitamin A	
Viamin C	
Iron	

39. What percent of calories will JB receive from the carbohydrate component? Round to the nearest whole number.

First, calculate the amount of calories from the carbohydrate component.

$$37.4 \text{ g carbohydrate} \times \frac{4 \text{ kcal}}{\text{g}} = 149.6 \text{ kcal}$$

Next, find the percentage of carbohydrate calories.

$$\frac{149.6 \text{ kcal}}{285 \text{ kcal}} \times 100 = 52.49, \text{ or } 52\%$$

40. The nurse was administering one carton (8 fl oz) of *Osmolite* to JB when she accidentally spilled 2 fl oz on the floor. The remaining amount in the carton was accurately delivered to the patient. How many calories did the patient actually receive? Do not round the answer.

$$\frac{8 \text{ fl oz}}{285 \text{ kcal}} = \frac{6 \text{ fl oz}}{X \text{ kcal}} \quad X = 213.75 \text{ kcal}$$

ADDITIONAL PN PRACTICE

USE THE FOLLOWING PN ORDER TO ANSWER QUESTIONS 41 – 42:

Parenteral Nutrition Order Form

Macronutrients 2-in-1

Premixed:

☐ **Clinimix (5/15)**
Amino acids 5% / Dextrose 15%

☐ **Clinimix (5/15) with electrolytes**
Amino acids 5% / Dextrose 15%

☐ **Clinimix (4.25/10)**
Amino acids 4.25% / Dextrose 10%

☒ **Clinimix (4.25/10) with electrolytes**
Amino acids 4.25% / Dextrose 10%

Directions (2-in-1 PN)

Infuse: ☒ Daily ☐ _____ times weekly

Select rate or volume:

Rate:
☒ Continuous infusion 75 mL/hr

☐ 12-hour infusion _____ mL/hr

Volume (liters/day):
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ Other _____

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41. How many calories will the PN provide from protein each day? Round to the nearest whole number.

Using the rate specified on the PN order form, calculate how many milliliters of PN the patient will receive each day.

$$75 \text{ mL/hr} \times 24 \text{ hrs} = 1{,}800 \text{ mL/day}$$

Then use the percentage strength of protein from the product ordered to calculate kcals/day from protein.

$$\frac{4.25 \text{ g protein}}{100 \text{ mL}} \times \frac{4 \text{ kcal}}{\text{g protein}} \times \frac{1{,}800 \text{ mL}}{\text{day}} = 306 \text{ kcal/day from protein}$$

42. How many calories will the PN provide from carbohydrates each day? Round to the nearest whole number.

$$\frac{10\ g}{100\ mL} \times \frac{3.4\ kcal}{g} \times \frac{1{,}800\ mL}{day} = 612\ kcal\ from\ carbohydrates$$

43. How many liters of this PN should be ordered to provide 1,420 kcals per day? Round to the nearest whole number.

Parenteral Nutrition Order Form

Macronutrients 2-in-1

Premixed:
☐ **Clinimix (5/15)** Amino acids 5% / Dextrose 15%
☒ **Clinimix (5/15) with electrolytes** Amino acids 5% / Dextrose 15%
☐ **Clinimix (4.25/10)** Amino acids 4.25% / Dextrose 10%
☐ **Clinimix (4.25/10) with electrolytes** Amino acids 4.25% / Dextrose 10%

Directions (2-in-1 PN)

Infuse: ☒ Daily ☐ _____ times weekly

Select rate or volume:

Rate:

☐ Continuous infusion _____ mL/hr

☐ 12-hour infusion _____ mL/hr

Volume (liters/day):

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ Other _____

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First, calculate how many kcals/L the PN provides.

Protein

$$\frac{5\ g\ protein}{100\ mL} = \frac{X\ g}{1{,}000\ mL} \quad X = 50\ g\ protein/L$$

$$\frac{50\ g\ protein}{L} \times \frac{4\ kcal}{g} = 200\ kcal\ protein/L$$

Dextrose

$$\frac{15\ g\ dextrose}{100\ mL} = \frac{X\ g}{1{,}000\ mL} \quad X = 150\ g\ dextrose/L$$

$$\frac{150\ g\ dextrose}{L} \times \frac{3.4\ kcal}{g} = 510\ kcal\ dextrose/L$$

Total

200 kcal/L protein + 510 kcal/L dextrose = 710 kcal/L for PN

Now determine how many liters will provide 1,420 kcals.

$$\frac{710\ kcals}{L} = \frac{1{,}420\ kcals}{X\ L} \quad X = 2\ L$$

44. How many calories will this PN provide per day? Round to the nearest whole number.

Parenteral Nutrition Order Form

Macronutrients 2-in-1

Premixed:
☒ **Clinimix (5/20)** Amino acids 5% / Dextrose 20%
☐ **Clinimix (5/20) with electrolytes** Amino acids 5% / Dextrose 20%
☐ **Clinimix (4.25/5)** Amino acids 4.25% / Dextrose 5%
☐ **Clinimix (4.25/5) with electrolytes** Amino acids 4.25% / Dextrose 5%

Directions (2-in-1 PN)

Infuse: ☒ Daily ☐ _____ times weekly

Select rate or volume:

Rate:

☐ Continuous infusion _____ mL/hr

☐ 12-hour infusion _____ mL/hr

Volume (liters/day):

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☒ Other 1.5

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$$\frac{5\ g}{100\ mL} \times \frac{4\ kcal}{g} \times \frac{1{,}500\ mL}{day} = 300\ kcal/day\ from\ protein$$

$$\frac{20\ g}{100\ mL} \times \frac{3.4\ kcal}{g} \times \frac{1{,}500\ mL}{day} = 1{,}020\ kcal/day\ from\ dextrose$$

300 kcal/day protein + 1,020 kcal/day dextrose = 1,320 kcal per day

45. TE is a 35-year-old female who is receiving PN therapy with 325 grams of dextrose, 85 grams of amino acids and 300 mL of 10% lipids. What percentage of total calories is provided by the protein content? Round to the nearest whole number.

First, calculate the calories from all sources; dextrose, amino acids and lipids.

Dextrose

$$\frac{3.4\ kcal}{g} \times 325\ g = 1{,}105\ kcal\ of\ dextrose$$

Protein

$$\frac{4\ kcal}{g} \times 85\ g = 340\ kcal\ of\ protein$$

Lipids

$$\frac{1.1\ kcal}{mL} \times 300\ mL = 330\ kcal\ of\ fat$$

Then, add up the total calories from all the sources. 1,105 + 340 + 330 = 1,775 kcal

Finally, calculate the percent of calories from protein.

$$\frac{340\ kcal}{1{,}775\ kcal} \times 100 = 19\%$$

USE THE FOLLOWING PN ORDER TO ANSWER QUESTIONS 46 – 54:

ITEM	QUANTITY
Dextrose 70%	250 g
Amino acids	50 g
Sodium chloride (MW 58.5)	44 mEq
Sodium acetate (MW 82)	20 mEq
Potassium	40 mEq
Magnesium sulfate	12 mEq
Phosphate	18 mmol

ITEM	QUANTITY
Calcium	12 mEq
MVI-12	5 mL
Trace elements-5	1 mL
Vitamin K-1	0.5 mg
Famotidine	10 mg
Regular insulin	20 units
Sterile water qs ad	960 mL

46. How many milliliters of dextrose 70% should be added to the PN? Round to the nearest whole number.

$$\frac{70\ g}{100\ mL} = \frac{250\ g}{X\ mL} \qquad X = 357\ mL \text{ of dextrose } 70\%$$

47. Using potassium phosphate (3 mmol of phosphate and 4.4 mEq of potassium/mL) vials in stock, calculate the amount of potassium phosphate that should be added to the PN to meet the phosphate requirement.

$$\frac{3\ mmol\ phosphate}{mL} = \frac{18\ mmol\ phosphate}{X\ mL} \qquad X = 6\ mL \text{ potassium phosphate}$$

48. If the pharmacist adds 6 mL of potassium phosphate (3 mmol/mL of phosphate and 4.4 mEq/mL of potassium) to the 2-in-1 product, how much potassium chloride (2 mEq/mL), in milliliters, should be added to fulfill the order? Round to the nearest tenth.

First, calculate the amount of K already added to the PN in the form of potassium phosphate.

$$\frac{4.4\ mEq\ K}{mL} \times 6\ mL = 26.4\ mEq\ K$$

Total K needed is 40 mEq. 40 mEq – 26.4 mEq = 13.6 mEq still needed from KCl.

$$\frac{2\ mEq\ K}{mL} = \frac{13.6\ mEq\ K}{X\ mL} \qquad X = 6.8\ mL\ KCl$$

49. The pharmacy has calcium gluconate 10% (0.465 mEq/mL) in stock. How many milliliters of calcium gluconate 10% should be added to the PN? Round to the nearest whole number.

$$\frac{0.465\ mEq\ Ca}{mL} = \frac{12\ mEq\ Ca}{X\ mL} \qquad X = 25.8, \text{ or } 26\ mL \text{ calcium gluconate } 10\%$$

50. The PN calls for 18 mmol of phosphate and 12 mEq of calcium (provided by 26 mL of calcium gluconate 10%, as calculated in the previous problem) in a volume of 960 mL. There are 2 mEq PO4/mmol. Confirm that the sum of the calcium and phosphorus do not exceed 45 mEq/L.

First, calculate the mEq of phosphate.

$$\frac{2 \text{ mEq PO4}}{\text{mmol}} \times 18 \text{ mmol PO4} = 36 \text{ mEq phosphate}$$

Then, add up the milliequivalents of phosphate and calcium. 36 mEq phosphate + 12 mEq calcium = 48 mEq.

The volume of the PN is 960 mL, or 0.96 L. Calculate the mEq per liter.

48 mEq/0.96 L = 50 mEq/L, which is greater than 45 mEq/L

When the sum of calcium and phosphate milliequivalents exceeds 45 mEq/L, there is a risk of precipitation (see previous discussion of Calcium and Phosphate Solubility in this chapter). The pharmacist should contact the prescriber to amend the order.

51. Calculate the amount of magnesium sulfate (4 mEq/mL) that should be added to the PN.

$$\frac{4 \text{ mEq}}{\text{mL}} = \frac{12 \text{ mEq}}{\text{X mL}} \quad \text{X = 3 mL magnesium sulfate}$$

52. What percentage of the total calories from the PN are represented by the protein component? Round to the nearest whole number.

First, calculate the total calories.

Dextrose

$$\frac{3.4 \text{ kcal dextrose}}{\text{g}} \times 250 \text{ g dextrose} = 850 \text{ kcal of dextrose}$$

Protein

$$\frac{4 \text{ kcal protein}}{\text{g}} \times 50 \text{ g protein} = 200 \text{ kcal of protein}$$

Total calories = 850 + 200 = 1,050 kcal. Now, calculate the percent of calories from protein.

$$\frac{200 \text{ kcal}}{1{,}050 \text{ kcal}} \times 100 = 19\%$$

QUESTIONS 53 – 54 REQUIRE KNOWLEDGE OF MILLIEQUIVALENTS FROM THE CALCULATIONS II CHAPTER.

53. How many milliliters of 23.4% sodium chloride should be added to the PN?

$$44 \text{ mEq} = \frac{\text{X mg} \times 1}{58.5} \quad \text{X = 2,574 mg, or 2.574 g}$$

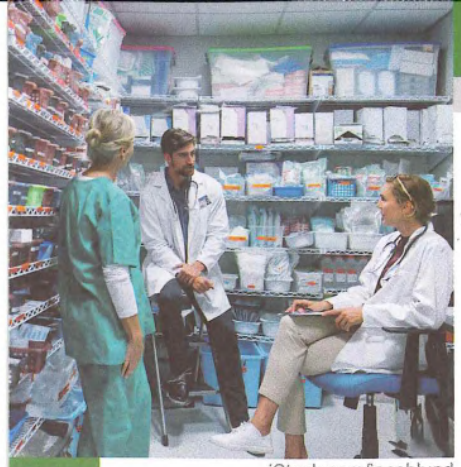
$$\frac{23.4 \text{ g}}{100 \text{ mL}} = \frac{2.574 \text{ g}}{\text{X mL}} \quad \text{X = 11 mL of 23.4\% NaCl}$$

This concentration of NaCl is hypertonic and is a high-alert drug due to heightened risk of patient harm when dosed incorrectly. Refer to the Medication Safety & Quality Improvement chapter.

54. Calculate the amount of 16.4% sodium acetate that should be added to the PN.

$$20 \text{ mEq} = \frac{\text{X mg} \times 1}{82} \quad \text{X = 1,640 mg, or 1.64 g}$$

$$\frac{16.4 \text{ g}}{100 \text{ mL}} = \frac{1.64 \text{ g}}{\text{X mL}} \quad \text{X = 10 mL of 16.4\% sodium acetate}$$



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CHAPTER 12

CALCULATIONS IV: CLINICAL

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BODY MASS INDEX

Overweight and obesity are health problems associated with increased morbidity from diabetes, hypertension, dyslipidemia, coronary heart disease and other conditions. Higher body weights are also associated with increases in all-cause mortality.

Body mass index (BMI) is an estimate of body fat based on height and weight in adults. BMI can over-estimate body fat in persons who are muscular and under-estimate body fat in frail older adults or those who have lost muscle mass. Waist circumference is used concurrently with BMI; disease risk increases when waist size is > 35 inches for women or > 40 inches for men.

BMI (in kg/m^2) is calculated as follows:

$$\text{BMI } (kg/m^2) = \frac{\text{weight (kg)}}{[\text{height (m)}]^2}$$

Alternatively, BMI can be calculated with weight in pounds and height in inches using a conversion factor to convert to units of kg/m^2:

$$\text{BMI } (kg/m^2) = \frac{\text{weight (pounds)}}{[\text{height (in)}]^2} \times 703 \text{ (to convert to } kg/m^2)$$

BMI CLASSIFICATIONS

BMI (kg/m^2)	CLASSIFICATION
< 18.5	Underweight
18.5 – 24.9	Normal (healthy) weight
25 – 29.9	Overweight
≥ 30	Obesity
■ 30 – 34.9	■ Class I
■ 35 – 39.9	■ Class II
■ ≥ 40	■ Class III (severe or extreme)

1. A male patient comes to the pharmacy and tells the pharmacist he is 6'7" tall and 250 pounds. His waist circumference is 43 inches. Calculate his BMI. Round to the nearest whole number. Is the patient underweight, normal weight, overweight or obese?

- Convert weight to kg: 250 pounds × 1 kg/2.2 lbs = 113.6363 kg
- Convert height to cm: 6'7" = 79 inches × 2.54 cm/inch = 200.66 cm

$$200.66 \text{ cm} \times \frac{1 \text{ m}}{100 \text{ cm}} = 2.0066 \text{ m}$$

$$\text{BMI } (kg/m^2) = \frac{113.6363 \text{ kg}}{(2.0066 \text{ m})^2} = 28.2 \text{ } kg/m^2\text{, rounded to 28, overweight}$$

Because of the rounding specifications in the question, the answer is the same regardless of the formula used. Expect the same on the exam.

2. Calculate the BMI for a male who is 6' tall and weighs 198 lbs. Round to the nearest whole number. Is the patient underweight, normal weight, overweight or obese?

$$\text{BMI } (kg/m^2) = \frac{198 \text{ pounds}}{(72 \text{ in})^2} \times 703 = 26.85 \text{ } kg/m^2\text{, rounded to 27, overweight}$$

Because of the rounding specifications in the question, the answer is the same regardless of the formula used. Expect the same on the exam.

BODY WEIGHT

There are three potential measures of body weight for a patient: actual (or total) body weight, ideal body weight and adjusted body weight. In pharmacy, weights are used to calculate drug doses, flow rates, creatinine clearance and more. The weight that should be used for each type of calculation (in an individual patient) is not always the same.

ACTUAL BODY WEIGHT OR TOTAL BODY WEIGHT

Actual body weight or total body weight (TBW) is the weight of the patient when weighed on a scale.

IDEAL BODY WEIGHT

Ideal body weight (IBW) is the healthy (ideal) weight for a person.

IBW (males) = 50 kg + (2.3 kg)(number of inches over 5 feet)

IBW (females) = 45.5 kg + (2.3 kg)(number of inches over 5 feet)

There are alternate methods of calculating IBW in children and adults < 5 feet.

ADJUSTED BODY WEIGHT

Adjusted body weight (AdjBW) is calculated when patients are obese or overweight.

$$AdjBW_{0.4} = IBW + 0.4(TBW - IBW)$$

WEIGHT-BASED DRUG DOSING

Adult doses are usually the same for all patients (e.g., lisinopril 10 mg daily), but weight-based (mg/kg) drug dosing is common in pediatrics and is recommended for some medications in adults.

Total body weight is used for weight-based dosing of most drugs in adults, but there are exceptions. Some drugs with a narrow therapeutic index (e.g., aminophylline, levothyroxine) are dosed based on IBW to avoid toxicity.

Dosing drugs in obesity is challenging because of the risk of underdosing (when standard doses are used) and overdosing (when dosing based on total body weight, especially in extreme obesity). In clinical practice, consult primary literature for the best dosing strategy for obese patients. Refer to the Study Tip Gal for guidance on selecting the right weight for drug dosing.

WHICH WEIGHT TO USE FOR DRUG DOSING (mg/kg)?

- Underweight: use TBW for **all** drugs
- Normal weight, overweight or obese: use TBW for **most** drugs

Drug-specific exceptions:

- Acyclovir IV*, aminophylline, theophylline, levothyroxine
  - TBW > IBW: use IBW
- Aminoglycosides
  - Overweight: use TBW or IBW (will likely be specified on the exam)
  - Obesity (TBW ≥ 120% of IBW): use AdjBW

**Acyclovir IV may be dosed with AdjBW in Class III obesity*

If a question on the exam specifies what weight to use (even if different from above), follow the instructions provided.

3. **A female patient is to receive 5 mg/kg/day of theophylline. The patient is 5'7" and weighs 243 pounds. Calculate the daily theophylline dose the patient should receive.**

$$\text{Total Body Weight} = 243 \text{ lb} \times \frac{1 \text{ kg}}{2.2 \text{ lbs}} = 110.4545 \text{ kg}$$

$$\text{IBW (female)} = 45.5 \text{ kg} + (2.3 \times 7 \text{ in}) = 61.6 \text{ kg}$$

$$\%\text{ above IBW} = \frac{110.4545 \text{ kg}}{61.6 \text{ kg}} = \sim 1.8\text{, she is 180\% of her IBW or 80\% above her IBW}$$

Refer to the Study Tip Gal on the previous page to determine which weight to use to dose the theophylline. This patient is obese. Theophylline is dosed based on IBW when TBW > IBW for safety.

$$\text{Theophylline 5 mg/kg} \times 61.6 \text{ kg} = 308 \text{ mg}$$

4. **A 34-year-old male (height 6'7", weight 287 pounds) is hospitalized after a motor vehicle accident. He develops a *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* infection. The physician orders tobramycin 2 mg/kg IV Q8H. Calculate the tobramycin dose. Round to the nearest 10 milligrams.**

$$\text{Total Body Weight} = 287 \text{ lb} \times \frac{1 \text{ kg}}{2.2 \text{ lbs}} = 130.4545 \text{ kg}$$

$$\text{IBW (male)} = 50 \text{ kg} + (2.3 \times 19 \text{ in}) = 93.7 \text{ kg}$$

$$\%\text{ above IBW} = \frac{130.4545 \text{ kg}}{93.7 \text{ kg}} = 1.39\text{, he is 139\% of his IBW or 39\% above his IBW}$$

Refer to the Study Tip Gal on the previous page to determine which weight to use to dose the aminoglycoside. This patient is obese. Aminoglycosides are dosed using adjusted body weight in obese patients.

$$\text{AdjBW}_{0.4} = 93.7 + 0.4\,(130.4545 - 93.7) = 108.4 \text{ kg}$$

$$\text{Tobramycin 2 mg/kg} \times 108.4 \text{ kg} = 216.8 \text{ mg, round to 220 mg IV Q8H}$$

HEIGHT IN INCHES

In the U.S., heights are generally presented in feet and inches vs using the metric system.

- Example 1: A patient is 5 feet 6 inches tall (often written 5'6"). How many inches tall is the patient?
  - ☐ 1 ft = 12 inches, so 5 ft = 60 inches
  - ☐ Next, add the additional 6 inches
  - ☐ 5'6" = 66 inches
  - ☐ For IBW calculation: patient is 6 inches over 5 feet
- Example 2: A patient is 6'3". How many inches tall is this patient?
  - ☐ 6 ft × 12 inches/ft = 72 inches
  - ☐ Next, add the additional 3 inches
  - ☐ 6'3" = 75 inches
  - ☐ For IBW calculation: patient is 15 inches over 5 feet

FLOW RATES

Intravenous (IV) infusions or continuous infusions are commonly used to deliver medications in many settings, including hospitals. Flow rates are used to specify the volume or amount of drug a patient will receive over a given period of time. Some examples include: milliliters per hour, milligrams per hour, mcg/kg/min or as the total time to administer the entire volume of the infusion (e.g., infuse over 8 hours). Sometimes flow rates are expressed in drops/min, which is discussed later in this chapter.

Flow rate problems can be performed with proportions or dimensional analysis. Principles of each are reviewed in Calculations I. Some of the following problems will be illustrated using both methods. Feel free to use either method.

5. A patient will receive 400 mg of a drug in a 250 mL IV bag. The rate of drug administration is 375 mcg per minute. Calculate the flow rate in milliliters per hour. Round to the nearest whole number.

The order specifies the rate of administration as 375 mcg/min. Many infusion pumps are set to deliver a certain volume of fluid per unit of time (e.g., mL/hr). This requires a conversion.

Dimensional analysis works well for flow rate problems. Here are the steps:

1. The 1st fraction is the drug concentration. Since you are solving for mL/hr, milliliters needs to be in the numerator.
2. The 2nd fraction converts the drug weight from milligrams to micrograms.
3. The 3rd fraction is the rate of drug administration.
4. The 4th fraction converts minutes to hours.
5. This combines the individual steps into one calculation. If using dimensional analysis, make sure that identical diagonal units cancel out to leave the desired units:

$$\frac{250\,\text{mL}}{400\,\text{mg}} \times \frac{1\,\text{mg}}{1{,}000\,\text{mcg}} \times \frac{375\,\text{mcg}}{\text{min}} \times \frac{60\,\text{min}}{1\,\text{hr}} = 14\,\text{mL/hr}$$

Flow rates depend on the dose of the medication and the concentration available. If the concentration of the medication is 400 mg/250 mL (in the example above), then the IV needs to run at 14 mL/hr to deliver 375 mcg/min.

If the pharmacy prepared a more concentrated product (e.g., 800 mg/250 mL, or twice as concentrated), then the IV will only need to run at 7 mL/hr to deliver the same dose. See math below:

$$\frac{250\ \text{mL}}{800\ \text{mg}} \times \frac{1\ \text{mg}}{1{,}000\ \text{mcg}} \times \frac{375\ \text{mcg}}{\text{min}} \times \frac{60\ \text{min}}{1\ \text{hr}} = 7\ \text{mL/hr}$$

6. The pharmacist has an order for heparin 25,000 units in 250 mL D5W to infuse at 1,000 units/hour. The pharmacy has the following premixed heparin bags in stock: 25,000 units in 500 mL ½ NS, 10,000 units in 250 mL D5W, and 25,000 units in 250 mL D5W. What should the infusion rate be set at in mL/hour?

The pharmacy has the heparin concentration that was ordered. First, calculate the concentration (units per mL).

$$\frac{25{,}000\ \text{units}}{250\ \text{mL}} = 100\ \text{units/mL}$$

Next use the concentration to convert the infusion rate from units/hour to mL/hr.

$$\frac{1{,}000\ \text{units}}{1\ \text{hr}} \times \frac{1\ \text{mL}}{100\ \text{units}} = 10\ \text{mL/hr}$$

Since 1,000 units/hour must be delivered to the patient and there are 100 units in each mL, the pump should be programmed for an infusion rate of 10 mL/hr.

A second way to solve flow rate problems is using dimensional analysis:

$$\frac{250\ \text{mL}}{25{,}000\ \text{units}} \times \frac{1{,}000\ \text{units}}{1\ \text{hr}} = 10\ \text{mL/hr}$$

Another way to solve these problems is to use a proportion:

$$\frac{25{,}000 \text{ units}}{250 \text{ mL}} = \frac{1{,}000 \text{ units}}{X \text{ mL}} \qquad X = 10 \text{ mL (10 mL/hr since we need to administer 1,000 units in 1 hour)}$$

Try solving the problems in this section both ways and decide which you prefer.

---

7. If 200 mg of drug are added to a 500 mL bag, what rate of flow, in milliliters per hour, will deliver 500 mcg of drug per hour? Round to the nearest hundredth.

$$200 \text{ mg} \times \frac{1{,}000 \text{ mcg}}{1 \text{ mg}} = 200{,}000 \text{ mcg}$$

$$\frac{200{,}000 \text{ mcg}}{500 \text{ mL}} = \frac{500 \text{ mcg}}{X} \qquad X = 1.25 \text{ mL/hour}$$

---

8. A nurse is hanging a 4% lidocaine drip for a patient. If the dose ordered is 6 mg/min, how many hours will a 250 mL bag last? Round to the nearest whole number.

$$\frac{4 \text{ g}}{100 \text{ mL}} = \frac{X \text{ g}}{250 \text{ mL}} \qquad X = 10 \text{ g or } 10{,}000 \text{ mg}$$

$$\frac{6 \text{ mg}}{\text{min}} = \frac{10{,}000 \text{ mg}}{X \text{ min}} \qquad X = 1{,}666.67 \text{ minutes}$$

Convert minutes to hours = 27.777 hrs, or 28 hrs

Or, solve another way:

$$\frac{1 \text{ hr}}{60 \text{ min}} \times \frac{1 \text{ min}}{6 \text{ mg}} \times \frac{1{,}000 \text{ mg}}{1 \text{ g}} \times \frac{4 \text{ g}}{100 \text{ mL}} \times 250 \text{ mL} = 27.777 \text{ hrs, or 28 hrs}$$

---

9. A 68 kg patient is receiving a drug in a standard concentration of 400 mg/250 mL of ½ NS running at 15 mL/hr. Calculate the dose in mcg/kg/min. Round to the nearest hundredth.

$$\frac{15 \text{ mL}}{\text{hr}} \times \frac{400 \text{ mg}}{250 \text{ mL}} = 24 \text{ mg/hr}$$

$$\frac{24 \text{ mg}}{\text{hr}} \times \frac{1{,}000 \text{ mcg}}{1 \text{ mg}} = 24{,}000 \text{ mcg/hr}$$

$$\frac{24{,}000 \text{ mcg}}{\text{hr}} \times \frac{1 \text{ hr}}{60 \text{ min}} = 400 \text{ mcg/min}$$

$$\frac{400 \text{ mcg/min}}{68 \text{ kg}} = 5.88 \text{ mcg/kg/min}$$

Or, solve another way:

$$\frac{15 \text{ mL}}{1 \text{ hr}} \times \frac{400 \text{ mg}}{250 \text{ mL}} \times \frac{1{,}000 \text{ mcg}}{1 \text{ mg}} \times \frac{1 \text{ hr}}{60 \text{ min}} \div 68 \text{ kg} = 5.88 \text{ mcg/kg/min}$$

10. The pharmacist has an order for heparin 25,000 units in 250 mL D5W to infuse at 1,000 units/hour. How many hours will it take to infuse the entire bag?

$$25{,}000 \text{ units} \times \frac{1 \text{ hr}}{1{,}000 \text{ units}} = 25 \text{ hrs}$$

11. If 50 mg of drug are added to a 500 mL bag, what rate of flow, in milliliters per hour, will deliver 5 mg of drug per hour?

$$\frac{500 \text{ mL}}{50 \text{ mg}} \times \frac{5 \text{ mg}}{\text{hr}} = 50 \text{ mL/hour}$$

12. A patient is to receive levetiracetam at a rate of 5 mg/min. The pharmacy has a 5 mL levetiracetam vial (100 mg/mL) which will be diluted in 100 mL of NS. What is the levetiracetam infusion rate, in mL/min? Do not include the volume of the 5 mL additive.

First, calculate the amount of levetiracetam in the vial.

$$\frac{100 \text{ mg}}{\text{mL}} = \frac{X \text{ mg}}{5 \text{ mL}} \qquad X = 500 \text{ mg}$$

Then, solve for the answer in mL/min.

$$\frac{100 \text{ mL}}{500 \text{ mg}} \times \frac{5 \text{ mg}}{\text{min}} = 1 \text{ mL/min}$$

13. A patient is to receive 600,000 units of penicillin G potassium in 100 mL D5W. A vial of penicillin G potassium 1,000,000 units is available. The manufacturer states that when 4.6 mL of diluent is added, a 200,000 units/mL solution will result. How many milliliters of reconstituted solution should be withdrawn and added to the bag of D5W?

$$\frac{200{,}000 \text{ units}}{\text{mL}} = \frac{600{,}000 \text{ units}}{X \text{ mL}} \qquad X = 3 \text{ mL}$$

FINAL VOLUME OF COMPOUNDED IV SOLUTIONS

Why does problem #12 say "do not include the volume of the 5 mL additive"? Because the answer might be different (depending on the rounding instructions) if you used 100 mL vs 105 mL for the final volume.

- Exam scenarios:
  - ☐ Explicit instructions (e.g., #12).
  - ☐ Language stating that a specific volume is "added to" some volume of a fluid (e.g., #22).
  - ☐ Rounding instructions are such that either method will yield the correct answer or volumes of additives are not provided.
  - ☐ Language stating that a specific volume is added "to make 1 liter" or "for a final volume of 1 L."

This can be handled in many ways in clinical practice, but institutions should have clear policies to avoid medication errors.

14. A patient is to receive metronidazole at a rate of 12.5 mg/min. The pharmacy has a 5 mL (100 mg/mL) metronidazole injection vial to be diluted in 100 mL of NS. How much drug in milligrams will the patient receive over 20 minutes?

$$\frac{12.5 \text{ mg}}{\text{min}} \times 20 \text{ minutes} = 250 \text{ mg}$$

15. A physician has ordered 2 grams of cefotetan to be added to 100 mL NS for a 56-year-old female with an anaerobic infection. Using a reconstituted injection containing 154 mg/mL, how many milliliters should be added to prepare the order? Round to the nearest whole number.

$$2{,}000 \text{ mg} \times \frac{1 \text{ mL}}{154 \text{ mg}} = 13 \text{ mL}$$

16. JY is a 58-year-old male hospitalized for a total knee replacement. He was given unfractionated heparin and developed heparin-induced thrombocytopenia (HIT). Argatroban was ordered at a dose of 2 mcg/kg/min. The pharmacy mixes a concentration of 100 mg argatroban in 250 mL of D5W. JY weighs 187 lbs. At what rate (mL/hour) should the nurse infuse argatroban to provide the desired dose? Round to the nearest whole number.

First, determine the amount of drug needed based on the body weight provided.

$$2 \text{ mcg/kg/min} \times 85 \text{ kg} = 170 \text{ mcg/min}$$

Then, calculate mL/hr.

$$\frac{250 \text{ mL}}{100 \text{ mg}} \times \frac{1 \text{ mg}}{1{,}000 \text{ mcg}} \times \frac{170 \text{ mcg}}{\text{min}} \times \frac{60 \text{ min}}{\text{hr}} = 25.5 \text{ mL/hr, rounded to 26 mL/hr}$$

17. A 165-pound patient is to receive 250 mL of a dopamine drip at a rate of 17 mcg/kg/min. The pharmacy has dopamine premixed in a concentration of 3.2 mg/mL in D5W. Calculate the infusion rate in mL/minute. Round to the nearest tenth.

Step 1: Calculate amount of drug in the 250 mL.

$$\frac{3.2 \text{ mg}}{\text{mL}} \times 250 \text{ mL} = 800 \text{ mg}$$

Step 2: Calculate amount of drug the patient needs per minute.

$$\frac{17 \text{ mcg}}{\text{kg/min}} \times \frac{1 \text{ kg}}{2.2 \text{ lbs}} \times 165 \text{ lbs} = 1{,}275 \text{ mcg/min or } 1.275 \text{ mg/min}$$

Step 3: Solve for milliliters per minute.

$$\frac{250 \text{ mL}}{800 \text{ mg}} \times \frac{1.275 \text{ mg}}{\text{min}} = 0.398 \text{ mL/min, or } 0.4 \text{ mL/min}$$

18. An order is written for phenytoin IV. A loading dose of 15 mg/kg is to be infused at 0.5 mg/kg/min for a 33-pound child. The pharmacy has phenytoin injection solution 50 mg/mL in a 5 mL vial in stock. The pharmacist will put the dose into 50 mL NS. Over how many minutes should the dose be administered? Round to the nearest whole number.

First, calculate the child's body weight in kg.

$$33 \text{ lbs} \times \frac{1 \text{ kg}}{2.2 \text{ lbs}} = 15 \text{ kg}$$

Next, find the dose the child will receive.

$$\frac{15 \text{ mg}}{\text{kg}} \times 15 \text{ kg} = 225 \text{ mg}$$

Then, calculate the time it will take to infuse this amount of drug at the given rate.

$$0.5 \text{ mg/kg/min} \times 15 \text{ kg} = 7.5 \text{ mg/min}$$

$$\frac{1 \text{ min}}{7.5 \text{ mg}} \times 225 \text{ mg} = 30 \text{ minutes}$$

DROP FACTOR

IV tubing is set to deliver a certain number of drops per minute (gtts/min). There are various types of IV tubing and each has a hollow plastic chamber called a drip chamber. The number of drops per minute can be counted by looking at the drip chamber. It is important to know how big the drops are to calibrate the tubing in terms of drops/mL. This is called the drop factor. Calculating flow rates from a drop factor is not as common with the prevalence of programmable "smart" pumps. It is a good skill to know for situations when a programmable pump is not available (or fails) and as a "double check."

19. A physician orders an IV infusion of D5W 1 liter to be delivered over 8 hours. The IV infusion set delivers 15 drops/mL. How many drops/min will the patient receive? Round to the nearest whole number.

$$\frac{15 \text{ drops}}{1 \text{ mL}} \times \frac{1{,}000 \text{ mL}}{8 \text{ hr}} \times \frac{1 \text{ hr}}{60 \text{ min}} = 31.25 \text{ drops/min, rounded to } 31 \text{ drops/min}$$

20. A physician orders 15 units of regular insulin in 1 liter of D5W to be given over 10 hours. What is the infusion rate, in drops/minute, if the IV set delivers 15 drops/mL? Do not include the insulin volume in the calculation.

$$\frac{15 \text{ drops}}{\text{mL}} \times \frac{1{,}000 \text{ mL}}{10 \text{ hrs}} \times \frac{1 \text{ hr}}{60 \text{ min}} = 25 \text{ drops/min}$$

21. The pharmacy has insulin vials containing 100 units of insulin/mL. A physician orders 15 units of regular insulin in 1 liter of D5W to be given over 10 hours. How many units of insulin will the patient receive each hour if the IV set delivers 15 drops/mL? Do not round the answer.

$$\frac{15 \text{ units}}{10 \text{ hrs}} = \frac{X \text{ units}}{1 \text{ hr}} \qquad X = 1.5 \text{ units/hr}$$

22. An order is written for 10 mL of a 10% calcium chloride injection and 10 mL of multivitamin injection (MVI) to be added to 500 mL of D5W. The infusion is to be administered over 6 hours. The IV set delivers 15 drops/mL. What should be the rate of flow in drops/minute to deliver this infusion? Round to the nearest whole number.

Total volume of the infusion = 500 mL (D5W) + 10 mL ($CaCl_2$) + 10 mL (MVI) = 520 mL

$$\frac{15 \text{ drops}}{\text{mL}} \times \frac{520 \text{ mL}}{6 \text{ hr}} \times \frac{1 \text{ hr}}{60 \text{ min}} = 21.6666, \text{ rounded to } 22 \text{ drops/min}$$

23. RS is a 45-year-old male, 5'5", 168 pounds, hospitalized with a diabetic foot infection. The pharmacist prepared a 500 mL bag of D5W containing 1 gram of vancomycin to be infused over 4 hours using a 20 gtts/mL IV tubing set. How many milligrams of vancomycin will the patient receive each minute? Round to the nearest tenth.

$$\frac{1{,}000 \text{ mg vanco}}{4 \text{ hrs}} \times \frac{1 \text{ hr}}{60 \text{ min}} = 4.166 \text{ mg/min, rounded to } 4.2 \text{ mg/min}$$

Notice that the patient's height and weight are not needed to solve this problem.

24. A patient is to receive 1.5 liters of NS running at 45 gtts/min using a 15 gtts/mL IV tubing set. Calculate the total infusion time in hours. Round to the nearest tenth.

$$\frac{15 \text{ gtts}}{1 \text{ mL}} = \frac{45 \text{ gtts}}{X \text{ mL}} \quad X = 3 \text{ mL}$$

$$\frac{3 \text{ mL}}{\text{min}} = \frac{1{,}500 \text{ mL}}{X \text{ min}} \quad X = 500 \text{ min}$$

$$500 \text{ min} \times \frac{1 \text{ hr}}{60 \text{ min}} = 8.3 \text{ hrs}$$

25. The 8 AM medications scheduled for a patient include tigecycline dosed at 6 mg/kg. The patient weighs 142 pounds. The nurse has tigecycline labeled 500 mg/50 mL NS. The dose will be administered over thirty minutes. The IV tubing in the unit delivers 15 drops per milliliter. What is the correct rate of flow in drops per minute? Round to the nearest drop.

$$\frac{142 \text{ pounds}}{2.2 \text{ pounds/kg}} \times \frac{6 \text{ mg}}{\text{kg}} = 387.27 \text{ mg required dose}$$

$$387.27 \text{ mg} \times \frac{50 \text{ mL}}{500 \text{ mg}} = 38.727 \text{ mL}$$

$$\frac{38.727 \text{ mL}}{30 \text{ min}} \times \frac{15 \text{ drops}}{\text{mL}} = 19.36 \text{ drops/min, rounded to } 19 \text{ drops/min for 30 minutes}$$

RENAL FUNCTION AND CREATININE CLEARANCE ESTIMATION

Creatinine is a break-down product produced when muscle tissue makes energy. The normal range for serum creatinine is approximately 0.6 – 1.3 mg/dL. If kidney function declines and creatinine cannot be cleared (excreted), the creatinine level will increase in the blood and the creatinine clearance (CrCl) will decrease. This tells us that the concentration of drugs that are renally cleared will also increase and a dose reduction may be required. Sometimes the serum creatinine can appear normal even when renal function is compromised (e.g., in the elderly). Refer to the Lab Values & Drug Monitoring and Renal Disease chapters.

Patients should be assessed for dehydration when the serum creatinine is elevated. Dehydration can cause both the serum creatinine (SCr) and the blood urea nitrogen (BUN) to increase. A BUN:SCr ratio > 20:1 indicates dehydration. Correcting the dehydration will reduce both BUN and SCr, and can prevent or treat acute renal failure. Signs of dehydration should also be assessed and these can include decreased urine output, tachycardia, tachypnea, dry skin/mouth/mucous membranes, skin tenting (skin does not bounce back when pinched into a fold) and possibly fever. Dehydration is usually caused by diarrhea, vomiting and/or a lack of adequate fluid intake.

26. Looking at the laboratory values below, make an assessment of the patient's hydration status.

	PATIENT'S VALUE	REFERENCE RANGE
BUN	54 mg/dL	7–20 mg/dL
Creatinine	1.8 mg/dL	0.6–1.3 mg/dL

A. The patient appears to be well hydrated.
B. The patient appears to be over-hydrated.
C. The patient is not experiencing dehydration.
D. The patient is experiencing dehydration.
E. The patient is experiencing fluid accumulation.

The correct answer is (D). The patient's BUN:SCr ratio is 54/1.8 = 30:1. Since 30:1 > 20:1, the BUN is disproportionately elevated relative to the creatinine, indicating that the patient is dehydrated.

27. NK is receiving a furosemide infusion at 5 mg/hr. The nurse notices her urine output has decreased in the last hour. Laboratory values are drawn and the patient has a SCr of 1.5 mg/dL and a BUN of 26 mg/dL. The nurse wants to know if she should stop the furosemide infusion due to the patient becoming dehydrated. What is the correct assessment of the patient's hydration status?

A. The patient appears to be over-hydrated given the laboratory results.
B. The patient is not experiencing dehydration given the laboratory results.
C. The patient is experiencing dehydration and may need to be started on fluids.
D. The patient has objective information indicating dehydration but the patient needs to be assessed subjectively as well.
E. None of the above are correct.

The correct answer is (B). The BUN:SCr ratio is 26/1.5 = 17.3:1, which is < 20:1. Continue to monitor the patient.

THE COCKCROFT-GAULT EQUATION

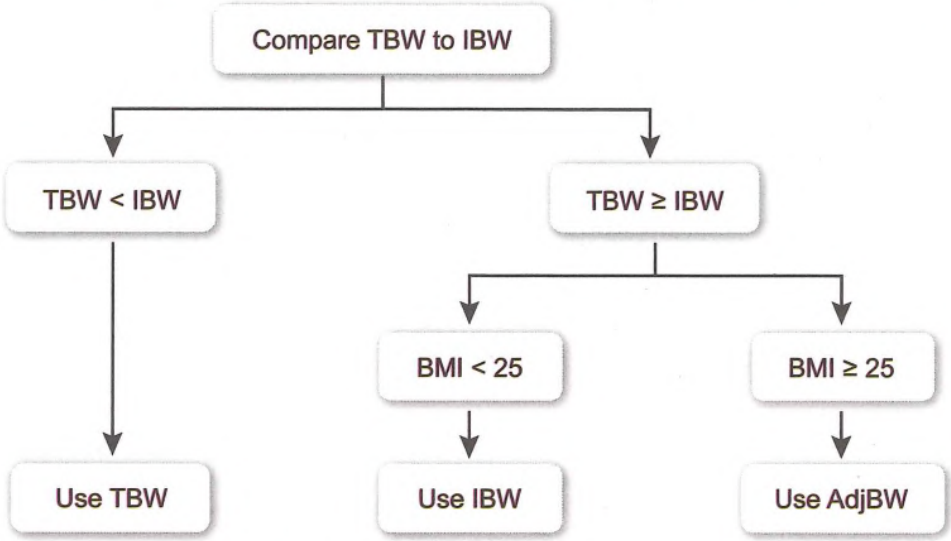
This formula is used by pharmacists to estimate renal function. It is not reliable in very young children or those with ESRD or unstable renal function. There are different methods (e.g., using cystatin C) used to estimate renal function in these circumstances. The Cockcroft-Gault equation should be known, as it is commonly used in practice.

$$\text{CrCl (mL/min)} = \frac{140 - (\text{age of patient})}{72 \times \text{SCr}} \times \text{weight in kg } (\times 0.85 \text{ if female})$$

Use age in years, weight in kg and SCr in mg/dL (same as mmol/L) in the Cockcroft-Gault equation

WHICH WEIGHT TO USE FOR CALCULATING CrCl?

Weight for creatinine clearance calculation



AdjBW = adjusted body weight; **BMI** = body mass index;
IBW = ideal body weight; **TBW** = total body weight.

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The CrCl is used to renally adjust most necessary medications [some medications are adjusted based on eGFR (e.g., metformin, SGLT2 inhibitors)]. The proper weight to use in the Cockcroft-Gault equation will not always be the same weight used to calculate a weight-based (mg/kg) dose. The following examples illustrate this point.

28. A 64-year-old female patient (height 5'5", weight 205 pounds) is hospitalized with a nosocomial pneumonia which is responding to treatment. Her current antibiotic medications include ciprofloxacin, imipenem/cilastatin and vancomycin. Her morning laboratory values include: K 4 mEq/L, BUN 60 mg/dL, SCr 2.7 mg/dL and glucose 222 mg/dL. Based on the renal dosage recommendations from the package labeling below, what is the correct dose of imipenem/cilastatin for this patient?

CrCl	≥ 90 mL/min	60–89 mL/min	30–59 mL/min	15–29 mL/min
Imipenem/Cilastatin Dose	1,000 mg IV Q8H	500 mg IV Q6H	500 mg IV Q8H	500 mg IV Q12H

Use the Study Tip Gal to determine which weight to use to calculate CrCl.

Total Body Weight = 93.1818 kg

IBW = 45.5 kg + (2.3 x 5 in) = 57 kg

$$BMI = \frac{205 \text{ lbs}}{(65 \text{ inches})^2} \times 703 = 34.1 \text{ kg/m}^2, \text{ obese}$$

Because her BMI is ≥ 25, adjusted body weight should be calculated:

$AdjBW_{0.4}$ = 57 + 0.4 (93.1818 - 57) = 71.47 kg

Then, use adjusted body weight in the Cockcroft-Gault equation:

$$CrCl = \frac{140 - 64}{72 \times 2.7} \times 71.47\ (0.85) = 23.75 \text{ mL/min}$$

The correct dose of imipenem/cilastatin is 500 mg IV Q12H.

29. Levofloxacin, dosing per pharmacy, is ordered for an 87-year-old female patient (height 5'4", weight 103 pounds). Her labs include BUN 22 mg/dL and SCr 1 mg/dL. Choose the correct dosing regimen based on the renal dosage adjustments from the package labeling below.

CrCl	≥ 50 mL/min	20–49 mL/min	< 20 mL/min
Levofloxacin Dose	500 mg Q24 hours	250 mg Q24 hours	250 mg Q48 hours

First, determine which weight to use in calculating the CrCl.

Total Body Weight = 46.8181 kg

IBW = 45.5 kg + (2.3 x 4 in) = 54.7 kg

Use total body weight for calculating CrCl since the patient's total body weight is less than her IBW.

$$CrCl = \frac{140 - 87}{72 \times 1} \times 46.8181 \text{ kg } (\times 0.85) = 29 \text{ mL/min}$$

The correct dose of levofloxacin is 250 mg Q24H.

30. A 50-year-old male (height 6'1", weight 177 pounds) has HIV and is being started on tenofovir disoproxil fumarate, emtricitabine and efavirenz therapy. His laboratory values include K 4.4 mEq/L, BUN 40 mg/dL, SCr 1.8 mg/dL, and CD4 count of 455 cells/mm^3. Using the renal dosage recommendations from the package labeling below, what is the correct dose of tenofovir for this patient?

CrCl	≥ 50 mL/min	30–49 mL/min	10–29 mL/min	< 10 mL/min
Tenofovir Dose	300 mg daily	300 mg Q48 hours	300 mg Q72-96 hours	300 mg weekly

First, determine which weight to use in calculating the CrCl.

Total Body Weight = 80.4545 kg

IBW = 50 kg + (2.3 x 13 in) = 79.9, or 80 kg

The IBW is almost the same as the actual weight. Either weight will yield a similar CrCl.

Next, calculate the CrCl.

$$CrCl = \frac{140 - 50}{72 \times 1.8} \times 80\ kg = 55\ mL/min$$

The dose of tenofovir disoproxil fumarate should be 300 mg daily.

ACID-BASE AND ARTERIAL BLOOD GASES

pH

The pH refers to the acidity or basicity of a solution. As a solution becomes more acidic (the concentration of protons increases), the pH decreases. Conversely, when the concentration of protons decrease, the pH increases and the solution is more basic, or alkaline. Pure water is neutral at a pH of 7, and blood, with a pH of 7.4, is slightly alkaline. Stomach acid has a pH of ~2, and is therefore acidic, with many protons in solution.

ARTERIAL BLOOD GASES

The acid-base status of a patient can be determined with an arterial blood gas (ABG). The primary buffering system of the body is the bicarbonate/carbonic acid system. The kidneys help to maintain a neutral pH by controlling bicarbonate (HCO_3) reabsorption and elimination. Bicarbonate acts as a buffer and a base. The lungs help maintain a neutral pH by controlling carbonic acid (which is directly proportional to the partial pressure of carbon dioxide or pCO_2) retained or released from the body. Carbon dioxide acts as a buffer and an acid. Alterations from the normal values lead to acid-base disorders. Diet and cellular metabolism lead to a large production of hydrogen ions (protons) that need to be excreted to maintain acid-base balance. ABGs are presented as follows in a written chart note:

ABG: pH/pCO2/pO2/HCO3/O2 Sat

INTERPRETING ABGs

- Step #1: Is it an acidosis or alkalosis?
  - ↓ pH = acidosis
  - ↑ pH = alkalosis
- Step #2: What other values are abnormal?
  - Respiratory: ↓ CO2 = alkalosis ↑ CO2 = acidosis
  - Metabolic: ↑ HCO3 = alkalosis ↓ HCO3 = acidosis
- Step #3: Which of the abnormal values in Step #2 matches with the pH in Step #1?
  - Example: ↓ pH, ↑ CO2 and normal HCO3
  - pH = acidosis and ↑ CO2 = acidosis; this is a respiratory acidosis
- Step #4: What if both CO2 and HCO3 are abnormal?
  - Usually only one of the values will match the pH, the other will go in the opposite direction as expected from the pH. This is called compensation.
  - Example: ↓ pH, ↓ CO2 and ↓ HCO3
  - ↓ pH = acidosis, ↓ HCO3 = acidosis and ↓ CO2 = alkalosis; this is a metabolic acidosis with some degree of respiratory compensation

An acid-base disorder that leads to a pH < 7.35 is called an acidosis. If the disorder leads to a pH > 7.45, it is called an alkalosis. These disorders are further classified as either metabolic or respiratory in origin. The primary disturbance in a metabolic acid-base disorder is the plasma HCO3 concentration. A metabolic acidosis is characterized primarily by a decrease in plasma HCO3 concentration. In a metabolic alkalosis, the plasma HCO3 concentration is increased. The primary disturbance in a respiratory acid-base disorder is pCO2. In respiratory acidosis, the pCO2 is elevated and in respiratory alkalosis, the pCO2 is decreased. Each disturbance has a compensatory (secondary) response that attempts to correct the imbalance toward normal and keep the pH neutral (see Study Tip Gal above for the steps to interpret ABGs).

ABG PARAMETER	REFERENCE RANGE
pH	7.35 – 7.45
pCO2	35 – 45 mmHg
pO2	80 – 100 mmHg
HCO3	22 – 26 mEq/L
O2 Sat	> 95%

Reference ranges for an arterial sample. Bicarbonate reported on an ABG is a calculated value and the reference range will differ from a venous sample.

DISORDER	SELECT CAUSES
Metabolic acidosis	CUTE DIMPLES*, diarrhea
Metabolic alkalosis	Diuretic use, vomiting
Respiratory acidosis	COPD, hypoventilation, opioid overdose
Respiratory alkalosis	Hyperventilation, hypoxia

**Mnemonic: causes of anion gap metabolic acidosis (next page).*

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31. A baby sitter brings a 7-year-old boy to the Emergency Department. He is unarousable. Labs are ordered and an ABG is drawn. The ABG results are as follows: 6.72/40/89/12/94%. What acid-base disorder does the child have?

Based on the pH, this is an acidosis. The pCO2 is normal and the HCO3 is decreased (low bicarbonate indicates acidosis). This is a metabolic acidosis.

32. An elderly female is admitted to the hospital after a motor vehicle accident. She suffered a head injury and is in the ICU. An ABG is obtained and the results are as follows: 8.25/29/97/26/98%. What acid-base disorder does the patient have?

Based on the pH, this is an alkalosis. The pCO2 is decreased (low pCO2 indicates alkalosis) and the HCO3 is normal. This is a respiratory alkalosis.

ANION GAP

When a patient is experiencing metabolic acidosis, it is common to calculate an anion gap. The anion gap is the difference in the measured cations and the measured anions in the blood. An anion gap assists in determining the cause of the acidosis. A mnemonic to remember the causes of a gap acidosis is CUTE DIMPLES [cyanide, uremia, toluene, ethanol (alcoholic ketoacidosis), diabetic ketoacidosis, isoniazid, methanol, propylene glycol, lactic acidosis, ethylene glycol, salicylates]. The anion gap is considered high if it is > 12 mEq/L (meaning the patient has a gap acidosis). The anion gap can be low, which is less common. A non-gap acidosis is caused by other factors, mainly hyperchloremic acidosis. Anion gap is calculated with this formula, using the values from the basic metabolic panel (venous sample).

Anion gap (AG) = Na – Cl – HCO3

33. A patient in the ICU has recently developed an acidosis. Using the laboratory parameters below, calculate the patient's anion gap.

Na	139
Cl	101
K	4.6
HCO3	19
SCr	1.6
BUN	38

Anion Gap = 139 – 101 – 19 = 19; therefore, the patient has a positive anion gap acidosis

34. SJ was recently admitted to the ICU with a pH of 7.27. Below is her laboratory data. Calculate SJ's anion gap.

144	95	68	414
3.22	21	2.1	

The stick diagram method of presenting a basic metabolic panel (BMP) and complete blood count (CBC) is presented in the Lab Values & Drug Monitoring chapter

Anion Gap = 144 – 95 – 21 = 28; therefore, SJ has a positive anion gap acidosis

BUFFER SYSTEMS AND IONIZATION

Maintaining a consistent pH is important for drug activity and stability (since drugs can degrade outside of a given pH range) as well as physiologic functions, like maintaining proper structural integrity of proteins and other cellular functions (e.g., the binding of oxygen to hemoglobin).

Buffers resist changes in pH; buffer solutions maintain a relatively stable pH when small quantities of acid or base are added. A buffer is most commonly made from mixing a weak acid and its conjugate base. In practice, this is accomplished by mixing the weak acid (e.g., acetic acid) with a salt of the acid (e.g., sodium acetate).

Recall that a strong acid dissociates (breaks into its ionic components) completely when added to a solution. Weak acids, however, minimally dissociate, and an equilibrium forms between the reactants and products of the reaction:

$$HA \rightleftharpoons H^+ + A^-$$

$$\underset{\text{(Acetic acid)}}{CH_3COOH} \rightleftharpoons H^+ + CH_3COO^-$$

↑	↑	↑
Weak acid	Proton	Conjugate base

The degree to which an acid dissociates (i.e., ionizes) is indicated by the equilibrium constant (Ka). For convenience (and to avoid working with exponents), the Ka is converted logarithmically to the pKa. The pKa describes the strength of the acid (the higher the pKa value, the weaker the acid). pKa should not be confused with the pH; pH describes the concentration of protons (hydrogen ions) in solution, while pKa is a characteristic of a particular compound that indicates its tendency to give up a proton. In general, buffers work best to resist changes in pH when the pH of the environment is approximately equal to the pKa.

HOW pKa RELATES TO THE pH

The degree to which a weak acid dissociates (i.e., exists in ionized or un-ionized form) depends on its pKa and the pH of the environment:

- If the pH > pKa, the ionized (basic) form is higher in concentration
- If the pH = pKa, the concentration of the ionized (not protonated) and un-ionized (protonated) forms are equal (i.e., 50% acid and 50% conjugate base)
- If the pH < pKa, the un-ionized (acidic) form is higher in concentration

Because most drugs are weak acids or bases, they will be affected by the pH of the environment in a similar manner. Phrased a different way, drugs that are in more acidic solution than their pKa will primarily exist in their acidic forms. In contrast, drugs that are in more basic solutions than their pKa will primarily exist in their basic forms.

Drugs in their ionized state are soluble, but cannot easily cross lipid membranes. On the other hand, un-ionized drugs are not soluble but can cross membranes and therefore reach the proper receptor site.

HENDERSON-HASSELBALCH EQUATION

The relationship between pH and pKa is described by the Henderson-Hasselbalch equation (or buffer equation), which can be used to find the pH of a solution based on the pKa of the compound and the concentrations of the acid/conjugate base, or be used to understand how a compound will dissociate (i.e., exist in acidic vs basic form) at a given pH.

For Weak Acids

$$pH = pK_a + \log \frac{[\text{conjugate base}]}{[\text{acid}]}$$

For Weak Bases

$$pH = (pK_{w^*} - pK_b) + \log \frac{[\text{base}]}{[\text{conjugate acid}]} \quad \text{or} \quad pH = pK_a + \log \frac{[\text{base}]}{[\text{conjugate acid}]}$$

**where pKw = 14*

Calculating the Log of a Number

35. Calculate log (1/0.5). Round to the nearest tenth.

$$\log \frac{[1]}{[0.5]}$$

1. If there is a division, solve the division first: 1/0.5 = 2.
2. The number 2 will be on the calculator screen. Solve for log[2] by hitting the $\log_{10}$ or log key.

   Some hand-held and on-screen calculators may require you to press the log key first, followed by "2" to solve this problem.
3. In this example, the answer is 0.3 (rounded to the nearest tenth).

Some calculators have parenthesis that allow you to enter the calculation as written in the problem, rather than performing each step separately. Practice these steps until you are familiar with them.

---

36. What is the pH of a solution prepared to be 0.5 M sodium citrate and 0.05 M citric acid (pKa for citric acid = 3.13)? Round to the nearest hundredth.

$$pH = pK_a + \log \frac{[\text{conjugate base}]}{[\text{acid}]}$$

$$pH = 3.13 + \log \frac{[0.5M]}{[0.05M]}$$

$$pH = 3.13 + \log[10]$$

$$pH = 3.13 + 1$$

$$pH = 4.13$$

---

37. What is the pH of a solution prepared to be 0.4 M ammonia (NH_3) and 0.04 M ammonium chloride (NH_4Cl) (pKb for ammonia = 4.76)? Round to the nearest hundredth.

$$pH = (pK_w - pK_{b)} + \log \frac{[\text{base}]}{[\text{conjugate acid}]}$$

$$pH = (14 - 4.76) + \log \frac{[0.4]}{[0.04]}$$

$$pH = 9.24 + \log[10]$$

$$pH = 9.24 + 1$$

$$pH = 10.24$$

38. What is the pH of a buffer solution containing 0.5 M acetic acid and 1 M sodium acetate in 1 liter of solution (pKa for acetic acid = 4.76)? Round to the nearest hundredth.

$$pH = pK_a + \log \frac{[\text{conjugate base}]}{[\text{acid}]}$$

$$pH = 4.76 + \log \frac{[1]}{[0.5]}$$

$$pH = 4.76 + \log[2]$$

$$pH = 4.76 + 0.301$$

$$pH = 5.06$$

PERCENTAGE OF DRUG IONIZATION IN A SOLUTION

The Henderson-Hasselbalch equation can be modified to calculate the percent of ionization of a drug. Since the pH is a measurement of the protons in the solution, the percent ionization is the percentage of the drug in the solution that has deprotonated.

For Weak Acids

$$\%\ \text{ionization} = \frac{100}{1+10^{(pKa-pH)}}$$

For Weak Bases

$$\%\ \text{ionization} = \frac{100}{1+10^{(pH-pKa)}}$$

39. What is the percent ionization of amitriptyline, a weak base with a pKa = 9.4, at a physiologic pH of 7.4?

Use the weak base formula:

$$\%\ \text{ionization} = \frac{100}{1+10^{(pH-pKa)}}$$

$$\%\ \text{ionization} = \frac{100}{1+10^{(7.4-9.4)}}$$

$$\%\ \text{ionization} = \frac{100}{1+10^{(-2)}}$$

$$\%\ \text{ionization} = \frac{100}{1.01}$$

$$\%\ \text{ionization} = 99\%$$

40. What is the percent ionization of naproxen, a weak acid with a pKa of 4.2, in the stomach at a pH of 3? Round to the nearest whole number.

Use the weak acid formula:

$$\% \text{ ionization} = \frac{100}{1+10^{(pKa-pH)}}$$

$$\% \text{ ionization} = \frac{100}{16.85}$$

$$\% \text{ ionization} = 6\%$$

DRUG CONVERSIONS

CALCIUM SALT CONVERSIONS

Calcium carbonate has acid-dependent absorption and should be taken with meals. Calcium carbonate is a dense form of calcium and contains 40% elemental calcium. A tablet that advertises 500 mg of elemental calcium weighs 1,250 mg. If 1,250 mg is multiplied by 0.40 (which is 40%), it will yield 500 mg elemental calcium.

Calcium citrate has acid-independent absorption and can be taken with or without food. Calcium citrate is less dense and contains 21% elemental calcium. A tablet that advertises 315 mg calcium weighs 1,500 mg. If 1,500 mg is multiplied by 0.21 (or 21%), it will yield 315 mg elemental calcium. This is why the larger calcium citrate tablets provide less elemental calcium per tablet. They may be preferred if the gut fluid is basic, rather than acidic.

Calcium acetate is used as a phosphate binder and not for calcium replacement. Though the capsules contain 25% elemental calcium, absorption from this formulation is poor. Calcium carbonate and citrate are most commonly used for calcium replacement. See the Osteoporosis, Menopause & Testosterone Use chapter for further details.

41. A patient is taking 3 calcium citrate tablets daily (one tablet, TID). Each weighs 1,500 mg total (non-elemental) weight. She wishes to trade her calcium tablets for the carbonate form. If she is going to use 1,250 mg carbonate tablets (by weight), how many tablets will she need to take to provide the same total daily dose of elemental calcium?

1,500 mg/tablet x 3 tablets/day x 0.21 = 945 mg elemental calcium daily

Each of the carbonate tablets (1,250 mg × 0.4) has 500 mg elemental calcium per tablet.

$$\frac{945 \text{ mg elemental calcium}}{X \text{ tablets}} = \frac{500 \text{ mg elemental calcium}}{1 \text{ tablet}} \qquad X = 1.89 \text{ tablets}$$

She would need to take 2 tablets daily to provide a similar dose. Calcium absorption increases with lower doses, so this patient should be instructed to take one tablet with the morning meal and one with the evening meal.

AMINOPHYLLINE TO THEOPHYLLINE

Aminophylline and theophylline are narrow therapeutic index drugs. They are dosed using IBW in normal weight, overweight and obese patients for safety (see Body Weight section at the beginning of this chapter). Conversions between aminophylline and theophylline must be known for the exam. To convert aminophylline to theophylline, remember "ATM":

- **A**minophylline to **T**heophylline: **M**ultiply by 0.8
- Theophylline to Aminophylline: Divide by 0.8

42. A physician writes an order for aminophylline 500 mg IV, dosed at 0.5 mg per kg per hour for a female patient (185 pounds, 5'1"). There is only theophylline in stock. How many milligrams of theophylline will the patient receive per hour? Round to the nearest whole number.

$$\text{IBW (female)} = 45.5\text{ kg} + (2.3 \times 1\text{ in}) = 47.8\text{ kg}$$

$$\frac{0.5\text{ mg aminophylline}}{\text{kg/hr}} \times 47.8\text{ kg} = 23.9\text{ mg/hr aminophylline}$$

The aminophylline dose must now be converted to theophylline.

$$23.9\text{ mg/hr aminophylline} \times 0.8 = 19.12\text{ mg/hr, rounded to the nearest whole number} = 19\text{ mg/hr of theophylline}$$

After solving the problem, read the question again to be certain the question was answered with the correct units (mg per hour of theophylline).

ABSOLUTE NEUTROPHIL COUNT

Neutrophils are our body's main defense against infection. The lower a patient's neutrophil count, the more susceptible that patient is to infection (see table below). A neutropenic patient should be monitored for signs of infection, including fever, shaking, general weakness or flu-like symptoms. Precautions to reduce infection risk, such as proper hand-washing and avoiding others with infection, should be followed. Further information is available in the Oncology and Lab Values & Drug Monitoring chapters.

CATEGORY	ABSOLUTE NEUTROPHIL COUNT
Neutropenia	≤ 1,000 cells/mm^3
Severe neutropenia	≤ 500 cells/mm^3
Profound neutropenia	< 100 cells/mm^3

CALCULATING THE ANC

Multiply the WBC (in total cells/mm^3) by the percentage of neutrophils (the segs plus the bands) and divide by 100. Neutrophils can be labeled polymorphonuclear cells (PMNs or polys) or segmented neutrophils (segs) on a lab report.

ANC (cells/mm^3) = WBC (cells/mm^3) × [(% segs + % bands)/100]

43. A patient is being seen at the oncology clinic today after her first round of chemotherapy one week ago. A CBC with differential is ordered and reported back as WBC = 14.8 × 10^3 cells/mm^3, segs 10% and bands 11%. Calculate this patient's ANC.

WBC = 14,800 cells/mm^3, Segs = 10% Bands = 11%

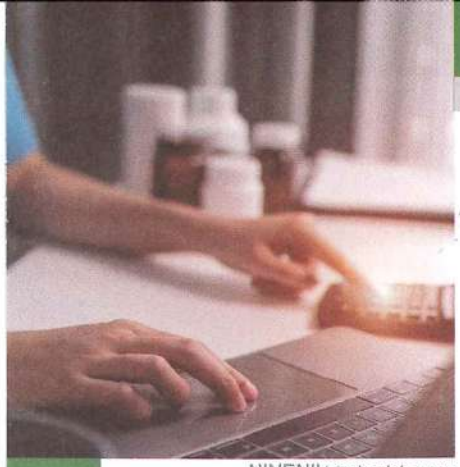
ANC = 14,800 × [(10% + 11%)/100] = 14,800 × 0.21 = 3,108 cells/mm^3

The WBC is reported as "14.8 × 10^3 cells/mm^3," which is equal to 14,800 cells/mm^3. Use the full number in the formula.

44. A patient is taking clozapine and is at the clinic for a routine visit. Today's labs include WBC = 4,300 cells/mm^3 with 48% segs and 2% bands. Calculate this patient's ANC.

WBC = 4,300 cells/mm^3, Segs = 48% Bands = 2%

ANC = 4,300 × [(48% + 2%)/100] = 4,300 × 0.5 = 2,150 cells/mm^3



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CHAPTER 13

CALCULATIONS V: EXAM-STYLE MATH PRACTICE

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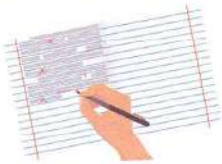
PRACTICE WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED



After all of the math concepts in Calculations I – IV have been mastered, test yourself with this exam-style math practice. Put all of your notes and formula sheets away. Grab a calculator and some scrap paper. Time yourself to finish the following 30 questions in ≤ 50 minutes. An answer key with detailed explanations follows.

TOOLS YOU WILL NEED

- Pen or pencil

- Scrap paper

- Calculator (use yours or an online scientific calculator)

EXAM-STYLE MATH PRACTICE

1. **A pharmacist receives a prescription for a 1.5% (w/w) hydrocortisone cream using cold cream as the base. She will use hydrocortisone injection (100 mg/mL, SG 1.5) to prepare the prescription because she has no hydrocortisone powder in stock. How many grams of cold cream are required to compound 60 grams of the preparation? Round to the nearest one decimal place.**

2. **How many milliliters of a 1:2,500 (w/v) solution of aluminum acetate can be made from 100 mL of a 0.2% solution?**

3. **A pharmacist will prepare an amoxicillin suspension to provide a 1600 mg daily dose for a child with an otitis media infection. The dose will be divided BID. To prepare amoxicillin 200 mg/5 mL, the pharmacist should add 76 mL of water to the powder for a final volume of 100 mL. The pharmacist mistakenly adds too much water and finds that the final volume is 110 mL. The pharmacy has no other bottles of amoxicillin, so the pharmacist will dispense the bottle with the extra water added. How many milliliters should the patient take twice daily to receive the correct dose? Round to the nearest whole number.**

4. **What is the ratio strength (w/v) of 50 mL containing a 1:20 (w/v) ammonia solution diluted to 1 liter?**

5. **How many milligrams of aminophylline will Mr. Kelly receive per day based on the order in the profile? Round to the nearest whole number.**

PATIENT PROFILE

Patient Name:	Mike Kelly
Address:	65 Laney Road
Age:	22 **Sex:** M
Allergies:	NKDA

DIAGNOSES

Asthma
Allergies

MEDICATIONS

Date	Prescriber	Drug/Strength/Sig
8/23	Sanchez	Montelukast 10 mg 1 tablet in the evening daily
8/23	Sanchez	Fluticasone MDI 1 puff (110 mcg) BID
9/29	Williams	Methylprednisolone 40 mg IV Q12H
9/29	Williams	Aminophylline 0.5 mg/kg/hr
9/29	Williams	D5½NS at 80 mL/hr
9/29	Williams	Albuterol nebulization 2.5 mg Q6H

LAB/DIAGNOSTIC TESTS

Test	Normal Value	Results		
		Date: 1/7	Date: 3/23	Date: 9/29
Weight		155 pounds	156 pounds	160 pounds
Height		5'9"		5'9"
WBC	4,000-11,000 cells/mm^3	12,000		11,225
K	3.5-5 mEq/L	3.7	4.1	3.6
Glu	65-99 mg/dL	101		142

6. A pharmacist receives an order for sodium chloride 4 mEq/kg/day for a patient who weighs 165 pounds. Using ½NS, how many liters will the patient require per day? Round to the nearest tenth. (M.W. of Na = 23, M.W. of Cl = 35.5)

7. A patient is receiving D5½NS with potassium chloride at 20 drops/min. After 10 hours, the patient has received a total of 40 mEq of potassium chloride using tubing that delivers 15 drops/mL. What is the percentage concentration of potassium chloride in the patient's IV fluid? Round to 2 decimal places. (M.W. of K = 39, M.W. of Cl = 36)

8. An order is written for a dopamine drip in the ICU. The order reads: "Start dopamine drip at 3 mcg/kg/min, titrate by 5 mcg/kg/min Q5 minutes to achieve SBP > 100 mmHg. Page the critical care resident for additional orders if maximum dose of 20 mcg/kg/min is reached." The patient weighs 165 pounds and the ICU stocks premixed dopamine drips (400 mg/250 mL) in the automated dispensing cabinet (ADC). What rate (mL/hr) should the dopamine drip be started at? Round to the nearest whole number.

9. A 46-year-old female with radiation enteritis is receiving 1,800 kcal from her parenteral nutrition. The solution contains amino acids, dextrose and electrolytes. There are 84.5 grams of protein in the PN and it is running at 85 mL/hour over 24 hours. What is the final concentration of dextrose in the PN solution? Express the answer as a percentage. Round to the nearest whole number.

10. ML is a 165-pound male receiving a premixed dopamine drip (400 mg/250 mL) in the ICU. The order states that the drip can be titrated to a maximum dose of 20 mcg/kg/min. What is the maximum rate (mL/hr) at which the drip can be run? Round to the nearest whole number.

11. A pharmacist in an oncology clinic receives the following prescription for a patient with Hodgkin's lymphoma: "Prednisone 40 mg/m^2/day PO on days 1-14." The patient is 5'1" and weighs 116 pounds. The hospital uses the following formula for BSA (m^2) = 0.007184 × height(cm)$^{0.725}$ × weight(kg)$^{0.425}$. How many 20 mg prednisone tablets should be dispensed to the patient?

12. A nephrologist is treating a patient with hyponatremia. She estimates the patient's sodium deficit to be 210 mEq. How many milliliters of normal saline (M.W. Na = 23, M.W. Cl = 35.5) will be required to replace the deficit?

13. A pharmacy technician is asked to compound three 500 mL doses of 5% albumin. How many 50 mL vials of 25% albumin will be required?

14. A patient is to receive a potassium acetate infusion prepared by adding 9 mL of 39.2% potassium acetate ($KC_2H_3O_2$) to 0.45% NS to make 1 liter. The patient is to receive the potassium acetate at 5 mEq/hr. What rate (mL/hr) will provide this dose? Round to the nearest whole number. (M.W. of K = 39, M.W of $C_2H_3O_2$ = 59)

15. **An intravenous infusion contains 2 mL of a 1:1,000 (w/v) solution of epinephrine and 250 mL of D5W. At what flow rate (mL/min) should the infusion be administered to provide 0.3 mcg/kg/min of epinephrine to an 80 kg patient? Round to the nearest whole number.**

16. **A cough syrup contains 4 grams of brompheniramine maleate per liter. How many milligrams are contained in one teaspoonful of the elixir?**

USE THE FOLLOWING CASE TO ANSWER QUESTIONS 17 – 19:

PATIENT PROFILE

Patient Name:	Helene Gudot						
Address:	1365 Stephens Avenue						
Age:	64	**Sex:**	F	**Height:**	5'5"	**Weight:**	135 pounds
Allergies:	*Bactrim*						

DIAGNOSES

Type 2 Diabetes	Dyslipidemia
Hypertension	Heart Failure

MEDICATIONS

Date	Prescriber	Drug/Strength/Sig
12/10	Marks	Metformin 1 gram BID
12/10	Marks	Regular insulin sliding scale per protocol
12/11	Marks	Insulin glargine 10 units SC QHS
12/12	Ventrakhan	D51/4NS + 20 mEq KCl at 75 mL/hr
12/12	King	Carvedilol 6.25 mg BID
12/13	Marks	D51/2NS + 10 mEq KCl at 60 mL/hr
12/13	Marks	Furosemide 40 mg IV Q12H
12/13	Ventrakhan	Ramipril 5 mg BID

LAB/DIAGNOSTIC TESTS

Test	Normal Value	Results		
		Date: 12/13	**Date:** 12/12	**Date:** 12/11
WBC	4,000-11,000 cells/mm^3	10.7	10.1	12.2
Na	135-146 mEq/L	139	142	145
K	3.5-5.3 mEq/L	4.3	4.1	3.3
Cl	98-110 mEq/L	104	105	101
HCO3	22-28 mEq/L	26	26	25
BUN	7-25 mg/dL	23	26	28
Creatinine	0.6-1.2 mg/dL	1.1	1.3	1.4
Glu	65-99 mg/dL	180 @ 0700	140 @ 0700	260 @ 0700
Glu	65-99 mg/dL	280 @ 1100	280 @ 1100	320 @ 1100
Glu	65-99 mg/dL	220 @ 1700	300 @ 1700	280 @ 1700
Glu	65-99 mg/dL	100 @ 2100	220 @ 2100	220 @ 2100

17. **Mrs. Gudot uses the following regular insulin sliding scale: "take 1 unit of insulin SC for every 20 mg/dL of blood sugar > 160 mg/dL." How many units of sliding scale insulin should have been administered on December 12th?**

18. **The pharmacist is asked to convert several of Mrs. Gudot's labs to different units so her case can be compared to a published case report. Convert her serum potassium (M.W. of potassium = 39) on December 13th to mg/dL. Round to the nearest tenth.**

19. **Convert Mrs. Gudot's serum sodium level on December 11th to mmol/L. Round to the nearest whole number. (M.W. of Na = 23)**

20. A patient is to receive acyclovir 5 mg/kg every 8 hours for an acute outbreak of herpes zoster. What daily dose, in milligrams, should a 110-pound female receive?

21. A patient received 4 mg of IV morphine. What is an equivalent dose of oral hydromorphone? Round to the nearest whole number. (10 mg of IV morphine is equivalent to 7.5 mg of oral hydromorphone)

22. If 200 capsules contain 500 mg of an active ingredient, how many milligrams of the active ingredient will 76 capsules contain?

23. If phenobarbital elixir contains 18.2 mg of phenobarbital per 5 mL, how many grams of phenobarbital would be used in preparing a pint of the elixir? Round to the nearest tenth.

24. How many calories will the patient receive each day from the following PN order? Round to the nearest whole number.

Parenteral Nutrition Order Form

Macronutrients 2-in-1

Premixed:
☐ **Clinimix (5/15)** Amino acids 5% / Dextrose 15%
☒ **Clinimix (5/15) with electrolytes** Amino acids 5% / Dextrose 15%
☐ **Clinimix (4.25/10)** Amino acids 4.25% / Dextrose 10%
☐ **Clinimix (4.25/10) with electrolytes** Amino acids 4.25% / Dextrose 10%

Directions (2-in-1 PN)

Infuse: ☒ Daily ☐ _____ times weekly

Select rate or volume:

Rate:

☒ Continuous infusion 60 mL/hr

☐ 12-hour infusion _____ mL/hr

Volume (liters/day):

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ Other _____

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25. A penicillin V 250 mg tablet equals 400,000 units of penicillin activity. A patient is taking penicillin V 500 mg tablets QID for 7 days. How much penicillin activity, in units, will this patient receive in the total prescription?

26. Oral potassium chloride 20% solution contains 40 mEq of potassium per 15 milliliters of solution. A patient needs 25 mEq of potassium daily. How many milliliters of 20% potassium chloride should the patient take? Round to the nearest tenth.

27. The pharmacist reviews Ms. Hoydt's enoxaparin order and labs in the profile. At this hospital, pharmacists have the authority to make renal dosage adjustments per package labeling when necessary. What is the correct enoxaparin dose for Ms. Hoydt?

PATIENT PROFILE

Patient Name:	Carolyn Hoydt						
Address:	13 Windgate Road						
Age:	37	**Sex:**	F	**Height:**	5'6"	**Weight:**	175 pounds
Allergies:	NKDA						

DIAGNOSES

DVT confirmed by ultrasound

MEDICATIONS

Date	Prescriber	Drug/Strength/Sig
7/5	Langston	Combined oral contraceptive 1 PO daily
7/5	Langston	Multivitamin 1 PO daily
11/15	Mason	Enoxaparin 1 mg/kg SC Q12H
11/15	Mason	D5½NS @ 70 mL/hr

LAB/DIAGNOSTIC TESTS

Test	Normal Value	Results		
		Date: 7/5	Date: 11/15	Date:
Na	135-146 mEq/L	136	142	
K	3.5-5.3 mEq/L	3.5	5.2	
Cl	98-110 mEq/L	109	105	
HCO3	22-28 mEq/L	25	26	
BUN	7-25 mg/dL	10	22	
Creatinine	0.6-1.2 mg/dL	0.7	1.4	
Glu	65-99 mg/dL	100	120	
Hgb	12-16 g/dL	12	13.6	
Hct	36-46%	37	41	

A. 175 mg SC Q12H

B. 175 mg SC once daily

C. 80 mg SC once daily

D. 80 mg SC Q12H

E. 60 mg SC Q12H

28. MH is a 72-year-old male patient hospitalized with decompensated heart failure and fever. Cultures are positive for aspergillosis. MH weighs 110 kg and will receive 0.25 mg/kg per day of amphotericin B (reconstituted and diluted to 0.1 mg/mL) by IV infusion. How many milliliters of amphotericin solution are required to deliver the daily dose?

29. The pharmacist reviews the order for IV *Bactrim* and the labs for Mr. Ross in the profile. What dose should Mr. Ross receive given the renal dosage recommendations below?

CrCl	> 30 mL/min	15–30 mL/min	< 15 mL/min
Sulfamethoxazole/ Trimethoprim (SMX/TMP)	No dosage adjustment required	Administer 50% of the recommended dose	Use is not recommended

PATIENT PROFILE

Patient Name: Jeremy Ross
Address: 22 Harris Lane
Age: 41 **Sex:** M **Height:** 6'1" **Weight:** 70 kg
Allergies: NKDA

DIAGNOSES

Depression
HIV
Dyslipidemia

MEDICATIONS

Date	Prescriber	Drug/Strength/Sig
5/5	Sangler	Nicotine patch 21 mg/day – apply 1 patch daily
5/5	Sangler	*Stribild* 1 tablet daily
6/15	Sangler	*Celexa* 20 mg 1 tablet daily
11/15	Mason	*Lipitor* 10 mg 1 tablet daily
12/1	Hern	*Bactrim* 20 mg TMP/kg/day IV divided Q6H

LAB/DIAGNOSTIC TESTS

Test	Normal Value	Results	
		Date: 12/1	Date: 5/5
WBC	4,000-11,000 cells/mm^3	10.7	9.5
CD4	800–1,100 cells/mm^3	187	226
Na	135-146 mEq/L	139	142
K	3.5-5.3 mEq/L	3.7	4.1
Cl	98-110 mEq/L	109	105
HCO3	22-28 mEq/L	24	26
BUN	7-25 mg/dL	7	9
Creatinine	0.6-1.2 mg/dL	0.6	0.8
Glu	65-99 mg/dL	120	136

A. 1400 mg TMP IV Q6H
B. 700 mg TMP IV Q6H
C. 400 mg TMP IV Q12H
D. 350 mg TMP IV Q6H
E. Mr. Ross should not receive *Bactrim*

30. What is the pH of a solution containing 0.2 mole of a weakly basic drug and 0.02 mole of its salt per liter of solution (pKa of the drug = 9.36)? Round to the nearest hundredth.

ANSWER KEY AND EXPLANATIONS

1. First, calculate the grams of hydrocortisone required for the prescription.

$$\frac{1.5\text{ g}}{100\text{ g}} = \frac{X\text{ g}}{60\text{ g}} \quad X = 0.9\text{ grams of hydrocortisone required}$$

Calculate the volume of hydrocortisone injection required.

$$\frac{100\text{ mg}}{1\text{ mL}} = \frac{900\text{ mg}}{X\text{ mL}} \quad X = 9\text{ mL}$$

Calculate the weight of 9 mL of hydrocortisone injection using the SG provided.

$$1.5 = \frac{X\text{ g}}{9\text{ mL}} \quad X = 13.5\text{ grams (weight of hydrocortisone injection)}$$

Calculate the grams of cold cream required.

60 g final product − 13.5 g (weight of hydrocortisone) = 46.5 g of cold cream

---

2. Both concentrations must be in the same units to use the Q1C1 = Q2C2 formula. So, 1:2,500 must be converted to a percentage strength first.

$$\frac{1\text{ part}}{2{,}500\text{ parts}} = \frac{X\text{ g}}{100\text{ mL}} \quad X = 0.04\text{ g, or }0.04\%$$

Now use the formula.

$$100\text{ mL} \times 0.2\% = Q2 \times 0.04\%$$

$$Q2 = 500\text{ mL}$$

---

3. Two methods to solve this calculation are shown:

$$\frac{200\text{ mg}}{5\text{ mL}} = \frac{X\text{ mg}}{100\text{ mL}} \quad X = 4{,}000\text{ mg}$$

$$\frac{4{,}000\text{ mg}}{110\text{ mL}} = \frac{800\text{ mg}}{X\text{ mL}} \quad X = 22\text{ mL}$$

$$\frac{4{,}000\text{ mg}}{110\text{ mL}} = \frac{X\text{ mg}}{\text{mL}} \quad X = 36.36\text{ mg/mL}$$

$$\frac{36.36\text{ mg}}{1\text{ mL}} = \frac{800\text{ mg}}{X\text{ mL}} \quad X = 22\text{ mL}$$

---

4. First, convert 1:20 to a percentage strength.

$$\frac{1\text{ part}}{20\text{ parts}} = \frac{X\text{ g}}{100\text{ mL}} \quad X = 5\text{ g, or }5\%$$

$$50\text{ mL} \times 5\% = 1{,}000\text{ mL} \times C2$$

$$C2 = 0.25\%$$

Convert 0.25% to ratio strength = 1:400

5. Aminophylline is dosed based on IBW.

IBW (male) = 50 kg + (2.3 x 9 in) = 70.7 kg

Aminophylline 0.5 mg/kg/hr x 70.7 kg x 24 hrs = 848.4 mg/day, round to 848 mg/day

6.

$$\frac{4\text{ mEq}}{\text{kg}} \times 75\text{ kg} = 300\text{ mEq/day}$$

$$300\text{ mEq} = \frac{X\text{ mg} \times 1}{58.5} = 17{,}550\text{ mg, or } 17.55\text{ g}$$

$$\frac{0.45\text{ g}}{100\text{ mL}} = \frac{17.55\text{ g}}{X\text{ mL}} \quad X = 3{,}900\text{ mL or } 3.9\text{ L}$$

7.

$$40\text{ mEq} = \frac{X\text{ mg} \times 1}{75} = 3{,}000\text{ mg, or 3 g of KCl have been given in 10 hours}$$

$$\frac{20\text{ drops}}{\text{min}} \times \frac{60\text{ min}}{1\text{ hr}} \times 10\text{ hrs} = 12{,}000\text{ drops infused in 10 hours}$$

$$\frac{15\text{ drops}}{\text{mL}} = \frac{12{,}000\text{ drops}}{X\text{ mL}} \quad X = 800\text{ mL have infused in 10 hours}$$

$$\frac{3\text{ g KCl}}{800\text{ mL}} = \frac{X\text{ g}}{100\text{ mL}} \quad X = 0.375\text{ g, or } 0.38\%$$

8.

3 mcg/kg/min x 75 kg = 225 mcg/min

$$\frac{250\text{ mL}}{400\text{ mg}} \times \frac{1\text{ mg}}{1000\text{ mcg}} \times \frac{225\text{ mcg}}{\text{min}} \times \frac{60\text{ min}}{1\text{ hr}} = 8.4\text{ mL/hr, or 8 mL/hr}$$

9. First, calculate the calories from dextrose by subtracting out the protein component.

$$84.5\text{ g} \times \frac{4\text{ kcal}}{\text{g}} = 338\text{ kcal}$$

1,800 kcal - 338 kcal of protein = 1,462 kcal from dextrose

Next, calculate the grams of dextrose in this PN.

$$1{,}462\text{ kcal} \times \frac{1\text{ g}}{3.4\text{ kcal}} = 430\text{ grams of dextrose}$$

Then, calculate the final concentration. This requires calculating the total volume the patient is receiving.

$$\frac{85\text{ mL}}{\text{hr}} \times 24\text{ hours} = 2{,}040\text{ mL}$$

$$\frac{430\text{ g dextrose}}{2{,}040\text{ mL}} = \frac{X\text{ g}}{100\text{ mL}} \quad X = 21\%$$

10.

$$20 \text{ mcg/kg/min} \times 75 \text{ kg} = 1500 \text{ mcg/min}$$

$$\frac{250 \text{ mL}}{400 \text{ mg}} \times \frac{1 \text{ mg}}{1000 \text{ mcg}} \times \frac{1500 \text{ mcg}}{\text{min}} \times \frac{60 \text{ min}}{1 \text{ hr}} = 56.25 \text{ mL/hr - max rate per order}$$

Round to the nearest whole number = 56 mL/hr

11.

$$\text{BSA } (m^2) = 0.007184 \times (154.94)^{0.725} \times (52.7272)^{0.425} = 1.5 \text{ m}^2$$

$$40 \text{ mg/m}^2\text{/day} \times 1.5 \text{ m}^2 = 60 \text{ mg/day}$$

Refer to the Oncology chapter for a discussion of BSA.

The patient will take 60 mg of prednisone (three 20 mg tablets) per day for 14 days. The pharmacist should dispense 42 of the 20 mg prednisone tablets.

12.

$$210 \text{ mEq} = \frac{\text{mg} \times 1}{58.5} \quad 12{,}285 \text{ mg or } 12.285 \text{ g}$$

$$\frac{0.9 \text{ g}}{100 \text{ mL}} = \frac{12.285 \text{ g}}{X \text{ mL}} \quad X = 1{,}365 \text{ mL of NS are required}$$

13.

$$\frac{5 \text{ g}}{100 \text{ mL}} = \frac{X \text{ g}}{500 \text{ mL}} \quad X = 25 \text{ g, or } 75 \text{ g for the three required doses}$$

$$\frac{25 \text{ g}}{100 \text{ mL}} = \frac{X \text{ g}}{50 \text{ mL}} \quad X = 12.5 \text{ g per 50 mL vial}$$

$$75 \text{ g required} \times \frac{1 \text{ vial}}{12.5 \text{ g}} \quad X = 6 \text{ vials of 25\% albumin required}$$

14.

$$\frac{39.2 \text{ g}}{100 \text{ mL}} = \frac{X \text{ g}}{9 \text{ mL}} \quad X = 3.528 \text{ g or } 3{,}528 \text{ mg}$$

$$X \text{ mEq} = \frac{3{,}528 \text{ mg} \times 1}{98} = 36 \text{ mEq}$$

$$\frac{1{,}000 \text{ mL}}{36 \text{ mEq}} \times \frac{5 \text{ mEq}}{\text{hr}} = 138.88 \text{ mL/hr, or } 139 \text{ mL/hr}$$

15.

1:1,000 ratio strength = 0.1% (w/v)

$$\frac{0.1\text{ g}}{100\text{ mL}} = \frac{X\text{ g}}{2\text{ mL}} \qquad X = 0.002\text{ g, or 2 mg}$$

The patient is 80 kg × 0.3 mcg/kg/min = 24 mcg/min

$$\frac{252\text{ mL}}{2\text{ mg}} \times \frac{1\text{ mg}}{1{,}000\text{ mcg}} \times \frac{24\text{ mcg}}{\text{min}} = 3\text{ mL/min}$$

16. First, convert grams to milligrams.

$$4\text{ g} \times \frac{1000\text{ mg}}{1\text{ g}} = 4{,}000\text{ mg per 1 liter}$$

1 L = 1,000 mL and 1 teaspoonful = 5 mL

Next, solve using a proportion.

$$\frac{4{,}000\text{ mg}}{1{,}000\text{ mL}} = \frac{X\text{ mg}}{5\text{ mL}} \qquad X = 20\text{ mg}$$

17.

140 mg/dL = no insulin

280 mg/dL – 160 mg/dL = 120 mg/dL; 120 mg/dL / 20 mg/dL = 6 units

300 mg/dL – 160 mg/dL = 140 mg/dL / 20 mg/dL = 7 units

220 mg/dL – 160 mg/dL = 60 mg/dL / 20 mg/dL = 3 units

Total sliding scale units for December 12th = 6 + 7 + 3 = 16 units

18.

$$4.3\text{ mEq} = \frac{X\text{ mg} \times 1}{39} \qquad X = 167.7\text{ mg}$$

4.3 mEq = 167.7 mg. The patient's serum potassium is reported as 4.3 mEq/L, which equals 167.7 mg/L.

$$\frac{167.7\text{ mg}}{1\text{ L}} \times \frac{1\text{ L}}{10\text{ dL}} = 16.8\text{ mg/dL}$$

19.

$$145\text{ mEq} = \frac{X\text{ mg} \times 1}{23} \qquad X = 3{,}335\text{ mg}$$

$$X\text{ mmols} = \frac{3{,}335\text{ mg}}{23} \qquad X = 145\text{ mmols, therefore 145 mEq/L = 145 mmol/L for sodium}$$

Note that mmols = mEq in this problem. For Na and K, the mmol and mEq are the same; 1 mmol = 1 mEq.

20. Begin by converting the patient's weight in pounds (lbs) to kilograms (kg).

$$110 \text{ pounds} \times \frac{1 \text{ kg}}{2.2 \text{ pounds}} = 50 \text{ kg}$$

Acyclovir should be dosed based on IBW in normal weight or obese patients [refer to Which Weight to Use for Drug Dosing (mg/kg) in Calculations IV]. Since no height is provided in the question, the only option is to use the weight provided. An adult female weighing 110 pounds is likely very close to IBW.

$$\frac{5 \text{ mg}}{1 \text{ kg}} = \frac{X \text{ mg}}{50 \text{ kg}} \quad X = 250 \text{ mg/dose} \times 3 \text{ doses/day} = 750 \text{ mg/day}$$

21.

$$\frac{4 \text{ mg IV morphine}}{X \text{ mg oral hydromorphone}} = \frac{10 \text{ mg IV morphine}}{7.5 \text{ mg oral hydromorphone}} \quad X = 3 \text{ mg oral hydromorphone}$$

22.

$$\frac{200 \text{ caps}}{500 \text{ mg}} = \frac{76 \text{ caps}}{X \text{ mg}} \quad X = 190 \text{ mg}$$

23. First, convert milligrams to grams.

$$18.2 \text{ mg} \times \frac{1 \text{ g}}{1{,}000 \text{ mg}} = 0.0182 \text{ g}$$

Use a proportion to calculate the grams needed for 1 pint.

$$\frac{0.0182 \text{ g}}{5 \text{ mL}} = \frac{X \text{ g}}{480 \text{ mL}} \quad X = 1.7 \text{ g}$$

Because of the rounding specifications in the question, the answer is the same regardless of the pint conversion used.

24. First, calculate the volume (mL) of PN the patient will receive in 24 hours based on the rate ordered:

$$60 \text{ mL/hr} \times 24 \text{ hours} = 1{,}440 \text{ mL/day}$$

Use the percentage strength of dextrose from the product ordered to calculate the calories from dextrose:

$$\frac{3.4 \text{ kcal}}{\text{g}} \times \frac{15 \text{ g}}{100 \text{ mL}} \times 1{,}440 \text{ mL} = 734.4 \text{ kcal from dextrose}$$

Use the percentage strength of amino acids from the product ordered to calculate the calories from protein:

$$\frac{4 \text{ kcal}}{\text{g}} \times \frac{5 \text{ g}}{100 \text{ mL}} \times 1{,}440 \text{ mL} = 288 \text{ kcal from protein}$$

Since no lipids were ordered, add the dextrose and protein calories to get the total calories:

$$734.4 \text{ kcals} + 288 \text{ kcals} = 1{,}022.4, \text{ or } 1{,}022 \text{ kcals/day}$$

25. If 250 mg contains 400,000 units, then 500 mg contains 800,000 units. The patient is taking 4 tablets daily, for 7 days (or 28 total tablets), at 800,000 units each.

$$\frac{800{,}000 \text{ units}}{1 \text{ tab}} = \frac{X \text{ units}}{28 \text{ tabs}} \qquad X = 22{,}400{,}000 \text{ units}$$

26.

$$\frac{40 \text{ mEq K}}{15 \text{ mL}} = \frac{25 \text{ mEq K}}{X \text{ mL}} \qquad X = 9.375, \text{ or } 9.4 \text{ mL}$$

27. The correct answer is (D). Total body weight is used to determine the weight-based dose of LMWHs. Since the patient's BMI is 28.3 kg/m^2 (overweight), her adjusted body weight is used in the Cockcroft-Gault equation to calculate CrCl. Her CrCl is 58.5 mL/min (well above the threshold of 30 mL/min, for changing the dosing interval of enoxaparin to once daily).

28. Begin by calculating the total daily dose (mg) for this patient.

$$\frac{0.25 \text{ mg}}{1 \text{ kg}} = \frac{X \text{ mg}}{110 \text{ kg}} \qquad X = 27.5 \text{ mg daily}$$

Calculate the volume of reconstituted amphotericin B solution needed per day.

$$\frac{27.5 \text{ mg}}{X \text{ mL}} = \frac{0.1 \text{ mg}}{1 \text{ mL}} \qquad X = 275 \text{ mL}$$

29. The correct answer is (D). Mr. Ross is of normal weight per BMI (BMI = 20.4 kg/m^2). His *Bactrim* dose will be calculated with his total body weight (20 mg TMP/kg/day × 70 kg = 1400 mg TMP/day or 350 mg TMP Q6H for normal renal function). His TBW is less than his IBW, so his CrCl should be calculated with his TBW and is ~160 ml/min. Renal dose adjustments will not be needed.

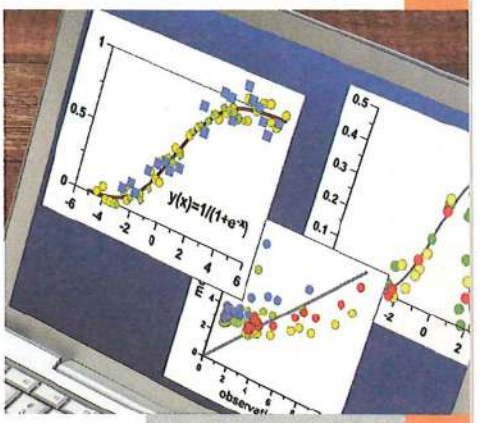
30.

$$pH = pK_a + \log\left[\frac{\text{base}}{\text{salt}}\right]$$

$$pH = 9.36 + \log\left[\frac{0.2}{0.02}\right]$$

$$pH = 9.36 + 1 \qquad pH = 10.36$$

BIOSTATISTICS



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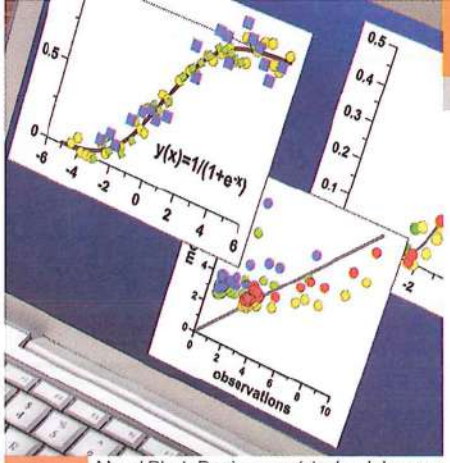

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= Study Tip Gal = Required Formula

PURPOSE OF BIOSTATISTICS

Statistics involves the collection and analysis of all types of data, from the average number of cars on a freeway to the blood pressure reduction expected from a calcium channel blocker. When statistics are used to understand the effects of a drug or medical procedure on people and animals, the statistical analysis is called biostatistical analysis, or simply, biostatistics.

A basic understanding of biostatistics is required to interpret studies in medical journals, such as the *New England Journal of Medicine* or *Pharmacotherapy*. Simple formulas and definitions, described here, prepare the reader to interpret most journal articles and feel confident tackling common practice-based situations, such as:

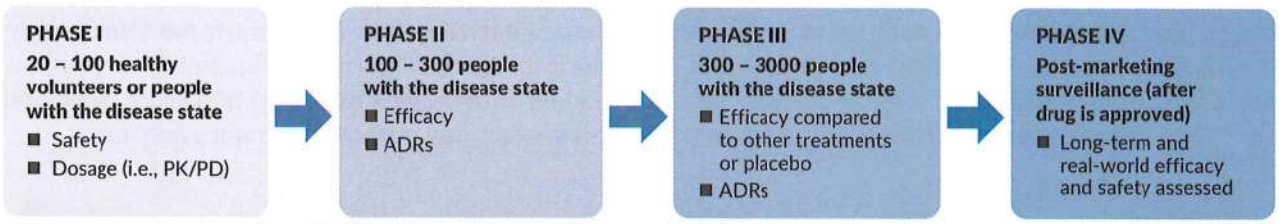
A physician asks if a patient should be switched from standard of care treatment to a new drug based on the relative risk reduction reported in a clinical trial.

A patient taking warfarin wants to know if he should switch to rivaroxaban because he saw a commercial claiming that "it prevents DVT or PE in 98% of patients."

CLINICAL TRIAL DEVELOPMENT

Before studies on human subjects can begin, the manufacturer must first file an investigational new drug (IND) application with the FDA. IND approval represents the FDA's permission to begin Phase I clinical studies in human subjects. The efficacy and safety of the new drug is then assessed through a series of four clinical trial phases (see diagram below), which vary in the number of patients enrolled and purpose. All phases of the drug approval process assess the drug's safety. If a drug is found to be unsafe at any phase, the FDA can halt the approval process.

After completion of Phase III studies, and if the drug has been shown to be safe and effective, the manufacturer must then complete a new drug application (NDA) with the FDA; for biologics, a biologics license application or BLA is used. Once approved, the manufacturer is given a period of exclusivity in which generic competitors cannot be approved for market. Any changes (e.g., new indication, new dose) to the approved labeling requires a supplemental new drug application (sNDA) or supplemental biologics license application (sBLA).



ADRs = adverse drug reactions, PK/PD = pharmacokinetics/pharmacodynamics

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Even though clinical trials provide important information about a drug's safety and efficacy, it is not always possible to have complete safety information at the time of approval. For this reason, Phase IV clinical trials are carried out after the drug has been approved (i.e., post-marketing surveillance). Based on these studies and other reports, the FDA can decide to add cautions to the product labeling or take steps for more serious issues that are discovered.

CLINICAL TRIAL DISCLOSURES

To protect the integrity of the clinical trial process each researcher must disclose any potential conflict of interest (COI), such as financial incentives or relationships which may impact their ability to remain objective and unbiased. Each COI then must be evaluated and addressed to ensure study ethics are maintained.

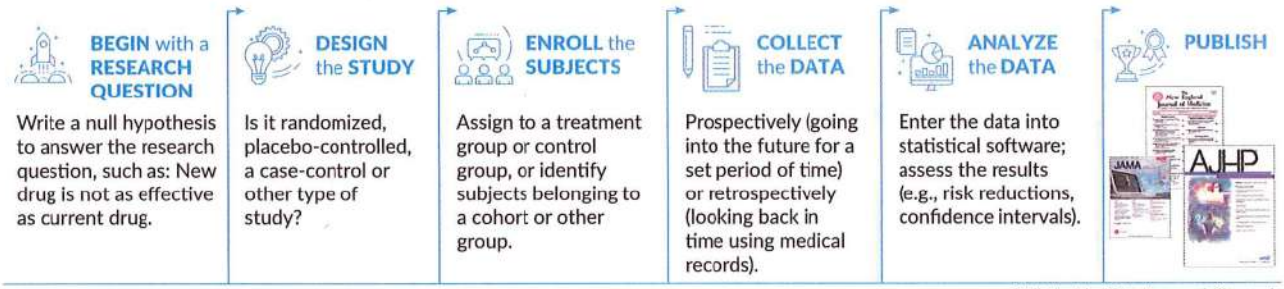
CLINICAL TRIAL BIASES

Any bias that could compromise the validity of a clinical trial's results should be addressed and avoided, if possible. Bias can occur at different steps in the progression of a clinical trial:

- Trial planning (before the study begins):
  - Sampling bias: occurs when the participants selected are not representative of the whole population.
  - Selection bias: occurs when there are baseline differences between the study groups, such as demographics or disease severity, that prevents the groups from being comparable and generalizable. Selection bias can result from lack of randomization or strict study exclusion criteria.
- Trial implementation:
  - Performance bias: occurs when the study groups are not treated equally. For example, if the study is not blinded, the treatment group could receive a different level of care and attention.
  - Detection bias: occurs when outcomes are measured differently between the study groups. To avoid detection bias the researcher assessing outcomes should be blinded to the study groups.
  - Attrition bias: occurs when study participants with specific characteristics, such as less severe disease, have a higher dropout rate, skewing the results of a study.
- Data analysis/publication:
  - Reporting bias: occurs when the decision to report on a finding is influenced by the result. For example, a researcher reports positive efficacy results more than adverse event data.
  - Publication bias: occurs when only research with positive results is published, and studies that had negative results or that did not have statistically significant results do not get published.

STEPS TO JOURNAL PUBLICATION

The path to publication for the classic type of research study is shown in the figure below. A study manuscript (description of the research and results) can be submitted for publication in a peer-reviewed journal. The editor of the journal selects potential publications and sends them to experts in the topic area for peer review. Peer review assesses the research design and methods, the value of the results and conclusions to the field of study, how well the manuscript is written, and whether it is appropriate for the readership of the journal. The reviewers make a recommendation to the editor to either accept the article (usually with revisions) or reject it. Data that contradicts a previous recommendation, or presents new information, can change treatment guidelines.



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ORGANIZATION OF A PUBLISHED CLINICAL TRIAL

A published clinical trial begins with an abstract that provides a brief summary of the article. The introduction to the study comes next, which includes background information, such as disease history and prevalence, and the research hypothesis. This is followed by the study methods, which describe the variables and outcomes, and the statistical methods used to analyze the data.

The results section includes figures, tables and graphs. A reader needs to interpret basic statistics and common graphs in order to understand the study results. The researchers conclude the article with an interpretation of the results and the implications for current practice.

TYPES OF STUDY DATA

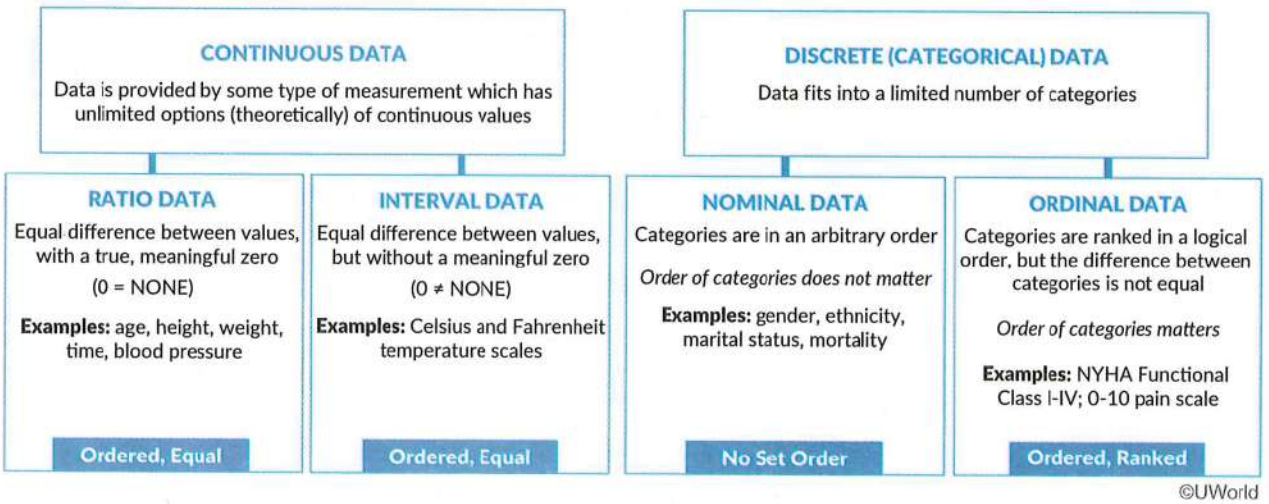
When data points, or values, are collected during a study, they can be analyzed to determine the degree of difference between groups, or some other type of association. The statistical tests used to perform the analysis depend on the type of data.

CONTINUOUS DATA

Continuous data has a logical order with values that continuously increase (or decrease) by the same amount (e.g., a HR of 120 BPM is twice as fast as a HR of 60 BPM). The two types of continuous data are interval data and ratio data. The difference between them is that interval data has no meaningful zero (zero does not equal none) and ratio data has a meaningful zero (zero equals none). The Celsius temperature scale is an example of interval data because it has no meaningful zero (0°C does not mean no temperature; it is the freezing point of water). Heart rate is an example of ratio data; a HR of 0 BPM is cardiac arrest (zero equals none; the heart is not beating).

DISCRETE (CATEGORICAL) DATA

The two types of discrete data, nominal and ordinal, have categories, and are sometimes called categorical data. Nominal and name are derived from the same word; with nominal data, subjects are sorted into arbitrary categories (names), such as male or female (0 = male, 1 = female or 0 = female, 1 = male). It includes "yes/no" data. Ordinal comes from the word order; ordinal data is ranked and has a logical order, such as a pain scale. In contrast to continuous data, ordinal scale categories do not increase by the same amount; a pain scale rating of 4 is worse than a pain scale rating of 2, but it does not mean that there is twice as much pain.



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SUMMARIZING THE DATA

MEASURES OF CENTRAL TENDENCY

Descriptive statistics provide simple summaries of the data. The typical descriptive values are called the measures of central tendency, and include the mean, the median and the mode (see Study Tip Gal below for mean, median and mode calculation examples).

- Mean: the average value; it is calculated by adding up the values and dividing the sum by the number of values. The mean is preferred for continuous data that is normally distributed (described below).
- Median: the value in the middle when the values are arranged from lowest to highest. When there are two center values (as with an even number of values), take the average of the two center values. The median is preferred for ordinal data or continuous data that is skewed (not normally distributed).
- Mode: the value that occurs most frequently. The mode is preferred for nominal data.

SPREAD (VARIABILITY) OF DATA

Two common methods of describing the variability, or spread, in data are the range and the standard deviation.

- Range: the difference between the highest and lowest values.
- Standard deviation (SD): indicates how spread out the data is, and to what degree the data is dispersed away from the mean (i.e., spread out over a smaller or larger range). A large number of data values close to the mean has a smaller SD. Data that is highly dispersed has a larger SD.

CENTRAL TENDENCY CALCULATIONS

Example

The diastolic blood pressure (DBP mmHg) reduction for 9 patients in a trial

3, 2, 3, 8, 6, 3, 4, 4, 3

Put the numbers in order:

2 + 3 + 3 + 3 + 3 + 4 + 4 + 6 + 8

The MEAN is 4 (36 ÷ 9 = 4).

The MODE is 3, the value that occurs most frequently.

The MEDIAN is 3, the value in the middle of the ranked (ordered) list.

The RANGE is the highest value (8) minus the smallest value (2). The range in DBP reduction is 6.

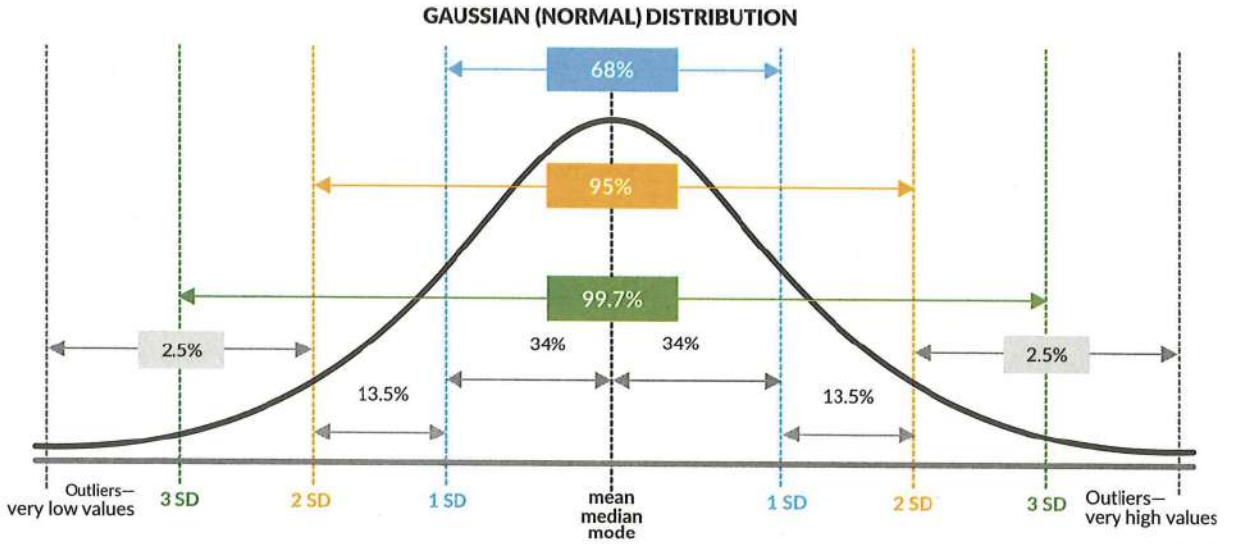
GAUSSIAN (NORMAL) DISTRIBUTIONS

Large sample sets of continuous data tend to form a Gaussian, or "normal" (bell-shaped), distribution (see the figure at the top of the next page). For example, if a researcher collects 5,000 blood pressure measurements (continuous data) from Idaho residents and plots the values, the graph would form a normal distribution.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A GAUSSIAN DISTRIBUTION

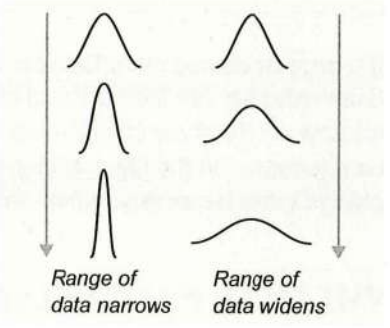
When the distribution of data is normal, the curve is symmetrical (even on both sides), with most of the values closer to the middle. Half of the values are on the left side of the curve, and half of the values are on the right side. A small number of values are in the tails. When data is normally distributed:

- The mean, median and mode are the same value, and are at the center point of the curve.
- 68% of the values fall within 1 SD of the mean and 95% of the values fall within 2 SDs of the mean.



NORMAL DISTRIBUTION SHAPES

The examples to the right show how the curve of normally distributed data changes based on the spread (or range) of the data. The curve gets taller and skinnier as the range of data narrows. The curve gets shorter and wider as the range of data widens (or is more spread out).

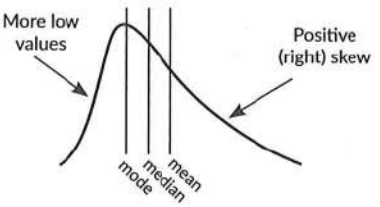


SKEWED DISTRIBUTIONS

Data that are skewed do not have the characteristics of a normal distribution; the curve is not symmetrical, 68% of the values do not fall within 1 SD from the mean, and the mean, median and mode are not the same value. This usually occurs when the number of values (sample size) is small and/or there are outliers in the data.

OUTLIERS (EXTREME VALUES)

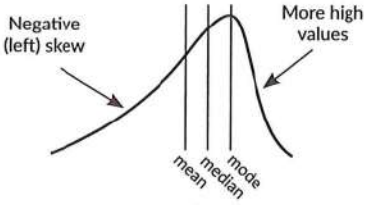
An outlier is an extreme value, either very low or very high, compared to the norm. For example, if a study reports a mean weight of 90 kg, then a patient in the same study with a weight of 40 kg or 186 kg is an outlier. When there are a small number of values, an outlier has a large impact on the mean and the data becomes skewed. In this case, the median is a better measure of central tendency. In the examples to the right, the median is in the middle of the data and not affected by outliers.



The distortion of the central tendency caused by outliers is decreased by collecting more values; as the number of values increases, the effect of outliers on the mean decreases.

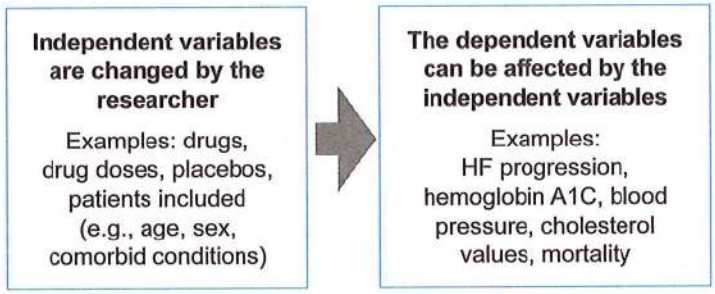
SKEW REFERS TO THE DIRECTION OF THE TAIL

Data is skewed towards outliers. When there are more low values in a data set and the outliers are the high values, data is skewed to the right (positive skew). When there are more high values in the data set and the outliers are the low values, the data is skewed to the left (negative skew).



DEPENDENT AND INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

A variable in a study is any data point or characteristic that can be measured or counted. Examples include age, sex, blood pressure or pain. Variables can be clinical endpoints such as death, stroke, hospitalization or an adverse event, or they can be intermediate (or surrogate) endpoints to assess an outcome, such as using serum creatinine to assess renal impairment.



An independent variable is changed (manipulated) by the researcher to determine whether it has an effect on the dependent variable (the outcome). Independent variables are the characteristics of the subject groups (treatment and control) selected for inclusion (e.g., age, sex, presence or absence of hypertension, diabetes or other comorbid conditions), or any other characteristic that could have an effect on the dependent variable.

TESTING THE HYPOTHESIS FOR SIGNIFICANCE

If a drug or device manufacturer wants to sell their product and make money, they will want research data that demonstrates that their product is significantly better than (or superior to) the current treatment or a placebo (no treatment). To show significance, the trial needs to demonstrate that the null hypothesis is not true and should be rejected, and the alternative hypothesis can be accepted. The null hypothesis and alternative hypothesis are always complementary; when one is accepted, the other is rejected.

THE NULL HYPOTHESIS AND ALTERNATIVE HYPOTHESIS

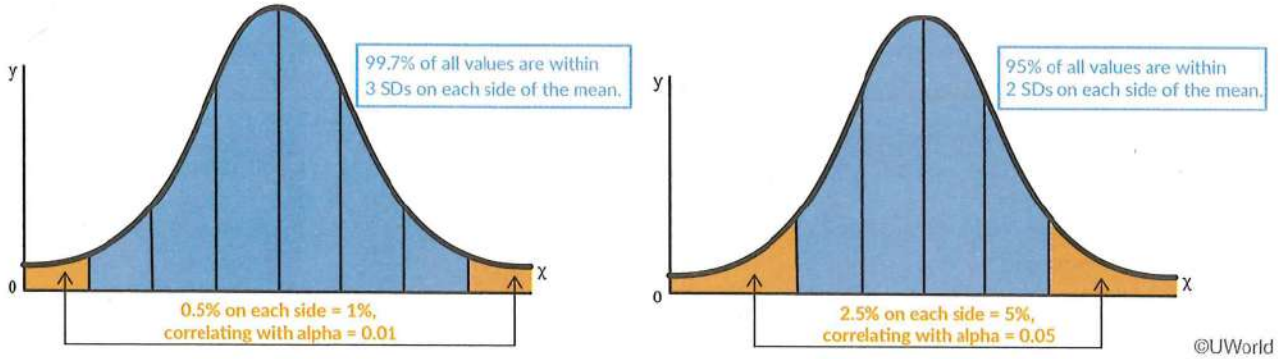
Null means none or no; a null hypothesis (H_0) states that there is no statistically significant difference between groups. A researcher who is studying a drug versus a placebo would write a null hypothesis that states that there is no difference in efficacy between the drug and the placebo (drug efficacy = placebo efficacy). The null hypothesis is what the researcher tries to disprove or reject.

The alternative hypothesis (H_A) states that there is a statistically significant difference between the groups (drug efficacy ≠ placebo efficacy). The alternative hypothesis is what the researcher hopes to prove or accept.

ALPHA LEVEL: THE STANDARD FOR SIGNIFICANCE

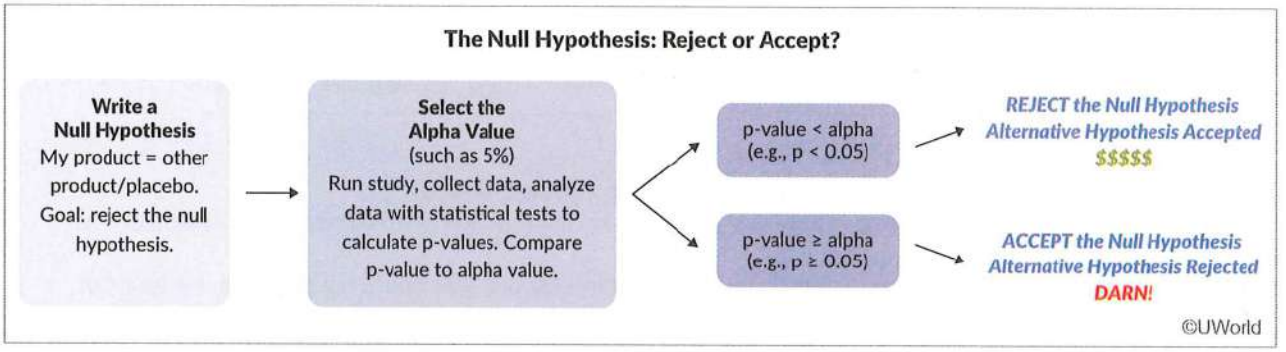
When investigators design a study, they select a maximum permissible error margin, called alpha (α). Alpha is the threshold for rejecting the null hypothesis. In medical research, alpha is commonly set at 5% (or 0.05). A smaller alpha value can be chosen (e.g., 1%, or 0.01), but this requires more data, more subjects (which means more expense) and/or a larger treatment effect.

ALPHA CORRELATES WITH THE VALUES IN THE TAILS WHEN DATA HAS A NORMAL DISTRIBUTION



COMPARING THE P-VALUE TO ALPHA

Once the alpha value is determined, statistical tests are performed to compare the data, and a p-value is calculated. The p-value is compared to alpha. If alpha is set at 0.05 and the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the result is termed statistically significant. If the p-value is greater than or equal to alpha ($p \geq 0.05$), the study has failed to reject the null hypothesis, and the result is not statistically significant.



CONFIDENCE INTERVALS

A confidence interval (CI) provides the same information about significance as the p-value, plus the precision of the result. Alpha and the CI in a study will correlate with each other.

$$CI = 1 - \alpha$$

If alpha is 0.05, the study reports 95% CIs; an alpha of 0.01 corresponds to a CI of 99%. The relationship between alpha, the p-value and the CI is described in the table here and in the figure above.

ALPHA	P-VALUE	MEANING	
0.05	≥ 0.05	Not statistically significant.	
0.05	< 0.05	95% probability (confidence) that the conclusion is correct; less than 5% chance it's not.	*Statistically Significant*
0.01	< 0.01	99% probability (confidence) that the conclusion is correct; less than 1% chance it's not.	
0.001	< 0.001	99.9% probability (confidence) that the conclusion is correct; less than 0.1% chance it's not.	

INTERPRETING CONFIDENCE INTERVALS

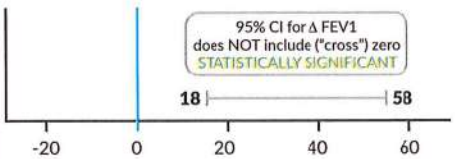
- **The values in the CI range are used to determine whether significance has been reached**
- **Determining statistical significance using the CI alone (without a p-value) is required for the exam**

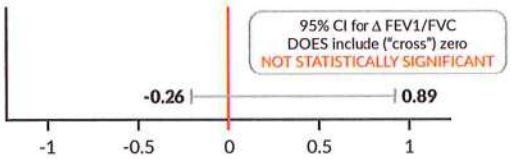
COMPARING DIFFERENCE DATA (MEANS)

- Difference data is based on subtraction [e.g., the difference in Δ FEV1 between roflumilast and placebo (below) was 38 (46 – 8 = 38)]
- The result is statistically significant if the CI range does not include zero (e.g., zero is not present in the range of values); for example:
  - The 95% CI for the difference in Δ FEV1 (18-58 mL) does not include zero → the result is statistically significant
  - The 95% CI for the difference in Δ FEV1/FVC (-0.26-0.89%) includes zero → the result is not statistically significant

LUNG FUNCTION	DRUG* (N = 745)	PLACEBO (N = 745)	DIFFERENCE (95% CI)
Δ FEV1 (mL)	46	8	38 (18-58)
Δ FEV1/FVC (%)	0.314	0.001	0.313 (-0.26-0.89)

**Roflumilast*



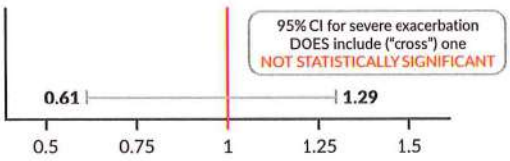


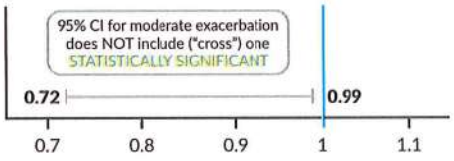
COMPARING RATIO DATA (RELATIVE RISK, ODDS RATIO, HAZARD RATIO)

- Ratio data is based on division [e.g., the ratio of severe exacerbations between roflumilast and placebo (below) was 0.92 (0.11/0.12 = 0.92)]
- The result is statistically significant if the CI range does not include one (i.e., one is not present in the range of values); for example:
  - The 95% CI for the relative risk of severe exacerbations (0.61-1.29) includes one → the result is not statistically significant
  - The 95% CI for the relative risk of moderate exacerbations (0.72-0.99) does not include one → the result is statistically significant

EXACERBATIONS*	DRUG** (N = 745)	PLACEBO (N = 745)	RELATIVE RISK (95% CI)
Severe	0.11	0.12	0.92 (0.61-1.29)
Moderate	0.94	1.11	0.85 (0.72-0.99)

**Mean rate, per patient per year*
***Roflumilast*





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CONFIDENCE INTERVALS AND ESTIMATION (EXTENT AND VARIABILITY IN THE DATA)

The goal of most medical research is to use the study results to promote the procedure or drug for use in the general population of patients with the same medical condition. Clinicians need to understand how their patients would benefit. The CI includes the treatment effect and the range; both are helpful in estimating the effect on others.

A CI can be written in different formats. For example, a study comparing metoprolol to placebo finds a 12% absolute risk reduction (ARR) in heart failure progression, with a 95% CI range of 6 – 35%. This can be written as ARR 12% (95% CI 6% – 35%) or as decimals, with commas in the range, such as ARR 0.12 (0.95 CI 0.06, 0.35). The CI indicates that you are 95% confident that the true value of the ARR for the general (or true) population lies somewhere within the range of 6% – 35%, with some values as low as 6% and others as high as 35%.

A narrow CI range implies high precision, and a wide CI range implies poor precision. If the reported CI range was 4% – 68%, the true value would still be within the range, but where? The range is wider, and therefore less precise. Cardiologists who interpret the results for their patients would not know whether to expect a result closer to 4% or 68%. A large range correlates to a large dispersion in the data. A narrower range is preferable.

In some studies, specific patient types will cause a wider distribution in data. For example, fibrates are used to lower triglyceride levels; they cause a greater reduction in patients with higher triglycerides. The consideration of where the patient is likely to fall within the range will become part of the assessment of the individual's baseline risk.

TYPE I AND TYPE II ERRORS

Consider what would happen if a drug manufacturer developed and marketed a new drug as better for heart failure than the standard of care, when in fact the new, expensive drug has similar benefits to the old drug (it is not better at all). The null hypothesis stated that the new drug and the old drug are equal. The statistical tests found a significant benefit with the new drug, and the null hypothesis was rejected when it should have been accepted.

TYPE I ERRORS: FALSE-POSITIVES

In the scenario described above, the conclusion was wrong and a type I error was made. The alternative hypothesis was accepted and the null hypothesis was rejected in error. The probability, or risk, of making a type I error is determined by alpha and it relates to the confidence interval.

$CI = 1 - \alpha$ α = probability of a type I error

When alpha is 0.05 and a study result is reported with $p < 0.05$, it is statistically significant and the probability of a type I error (making the wrong conclusion) is < 5%. You are 95% confident (0.95 = 1 – 0.05) that your result is correct and not due to chance.

TYPE II ERRORS: FALSE-NEGATIVES

The probability of a type II error, denoted as beta (β), occurs when the null hypothesis is accepted when it should have been rejected. Beta is set by the investigators during the design of a study. It is typically set at 0.1 or 0.2, meaning the risk of a type II error is 10% or 20%. The risk of a type II error increases if the sample size is too small. To decrease this risk, a power analysis is performed to determine the sample size needed to detect a true difference between groups.

STUDY POWER

Power is the probability that a test will reject the null hypothesis correctly (i.e., the power to avoid a type II error). Power = 1 − β. As the power increases, the chance of a type II error decreases. Power is determined by the number of outcome values collected, the difference in outcome rates between the groups, and the significance (alpha) level. If beta is set at 0.2, the study has 80% power (there is a 20% chance of missing a true difference and making a type II error). If beta is set at 0.1, the study has 90% power. A larger sample size is needed to increase study power and decrease the risk of a type II error.

	H_0 ACCEPTED	H_0 REJECTED
H0 is TRUE (NO difference between groups)	Correct Conclusion	Type I Error Committed FALSE POSITIVE
H0 is FALSE (There IS a difference between groups)	Type II Error Committed FALSE NEGATIVE	Correct Conclusion

H_0 = the null hypothesis

RISK

In healthcare, risk refers to the probability of an event (how likely it is to occur) when an intervention, such as a drug, is given. The lack of intervention is measured as the effect in the placebo (or control) group.

RELATIVE RISK (OR RISK RATIO)

The relative risk (RR) is the ratio of risk in the exposed group (treatment) divided by risk in the control group.

RR FORMULA

$$\text{Risk} = \frac{\text{Number of subjects in group with an unfavorable event}}{\text{Total number of subjects in group}}$$

$$\text{RR} = \frac{\text{Risk in treatment group}}{\text{Risk in control group}}$$

RR CALCULATION

A placebo-controlled study was performed to evaluate whether metoprolol reduces disease progression in patients with heart failure. A total of 10,111 patients were enrolled and followed for 12 months. What is the relative risk of HF progression in the metoprolol-treated group versus the placebo group?

Calculate the risk of HF progression in each group. Then calculate RR.

	METOPROLOL N = 5,123	CONTROL N = 4,988
HF progression	823	1,397

Metoprolol Risk	Control Risk
$\frac{823}{5{,}123} = 0.16$	$\frac{1{,}397}{4{,}988} = 0.28$

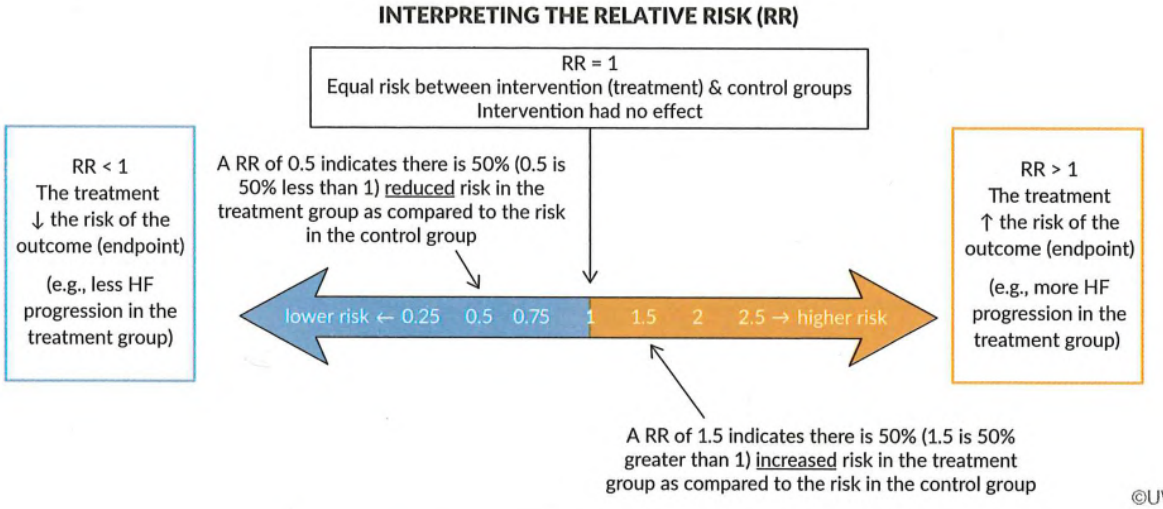
$$\text{RR} = \frac{0.16}{0.28} = 0.57 \times 100 = 57\%$$

Answer can be expressed as a decimal or a percentage; the exam question will specify with instructions

RR INTERPRETATION

RR = 1 (or 100%) implies no difference in risk of the outcome between the groups.
RR > 1 (or 100%) implies greater risk of the outcome in the treatment group.
RR < 1 (or 100%) implies lower risk (reduced risk) of the outcome in the treatment group.

In the metoprolol study, the RR of HF progression was 57%. Patients treated with metoprolol were 57% as likely to have progression of disease as placebo-treated patients.



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RELATIVE RISK REDUCTION

The RR calculation determines whether there is less risk (RR < 1) or more risk (RR > 1). The relative risk reduction (RRR) is calculated after the RR and indicates how much the risk is reduced in the treatment group compared to the control group.

RRR FORMULA

$$RRR = \frac{(\%\text{ risk in control group} - \%\text{ risk in treatment group})}{\%\text{ risk in the control group}}$$

or

$$1 - RR^*$$

Decimals or percentages may be used for risks

**Must use decimal form of RR*

RRR CALCULATION

Using the risks previously calculated for HF progression in the treatment and control groups (metoprolol: 16% and placebo: 28%), calculate the RRR of HF progression.

$$RRR = \frac{(28\% - 16\%)}{28\%} = 0.43$$

or

$$RRR = 1 - 0.57 = 0.43$$

Answer can be expressed as a decimal or percentage; the exam question will specify with instructions

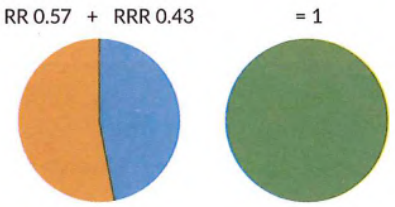
RRR INTERPRETATION

The RRR is 43%. Metoprolol-treated patients were 43% less likely to have HF progression than placebo-treated patients.

INTERPRETING THE RELATIVE RISK REDUCTION (RRR)

RR: metoprolol patients were 57% as likely (as the control group) to suffer from HF progression.

RRR: metoprolol patients were 43% less likely (than the control group) to suffer from HF progression.



RR	**AS likely (vs. the control)**
RRR	**LESS likely (vs. the control)**
Therefore	**RR + RRR = 100%**

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ABSOLUTE RISK REDUCTION

A clinician is listening to a presentation on a drug. The drug manufacturer representative reports that the drug causes 48% less nausea than the standard treatment. The result sounds great; the clinician asks the pharmaceutical representative: what is the absolute risk reduction (ARR)?

The RR and RRR provide relative (proportional) differences in risk between the treatment group and the control group; they have no meaning in terms of absolute risk.

Absolute risk reduction is more useful because it includes the reduction in risk and the incidence rate of the outcome. If the risk of nausea is reduced, but the risk was small to begin with (perhaps the drug caused very little nausea), the large risk reduction has little practical benefit.

It is best if a study reports both ARR and RRR, and for clinicians to understand how to interpret the risk for their patients. If the ARR is not reported, it is possible that the risk reduction, in terms of a decrease in absolute risk, is minimal.

ARR FORMULA

ARR = (% risk in control group) − (% risk in treatment group)

ARR CALCULATION

Using the risks previously calculated for HF progression in the metoprolol study, calculate the ARR of HF progression.

Metoprolol Risk	Control Risk
$\frac{823}{5{,}123} = 0.16$	$\frac{1{,}397}{4{,}988} = 0.28$

ARR = 0.28 − 0.16 = 0.12 x 100 = 12%

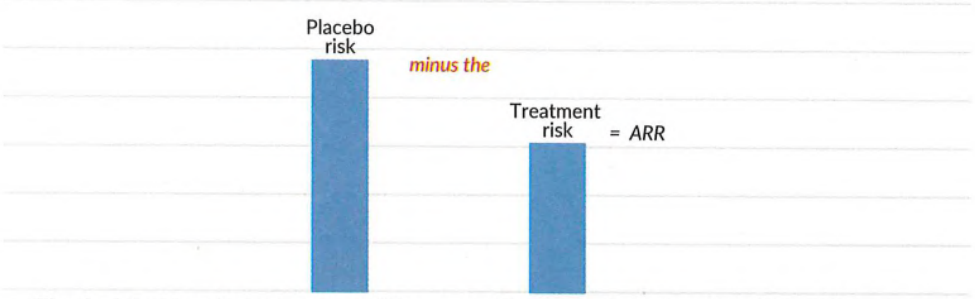
Answer can be expressed as a decimal or a percentage; the exam question will specify with instructions

ARR INTERPRETATION

The ARR is 12%, meaning 12 out of every 100 patients benefit from the treatment. Said another way, for every 100 patients treated with metoprolol, 12 fewer patients will have HF progression.

An additional benefit of calculating the ARR is to be able to use the inverse of the ARR to determine the number needed to treat (NNT) and number needed to harm (NNH). These concepts are discussed next.

INTERPRETING THE ABSOLUTE RISK REDUCTION (ARR)



The absolute risk reduction is the true difference in risk between the treatment and the placebo groups. Said another way, the ARR is the net effect (benefit) beyond the effect obtained from a placebo.

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NUMBER NEEDED TO TREAT OR HARM

NNT and NNH help clinicians answer the question: how many patients need to receive the drug for one patient to get benefit (NNT) or experience harm (NNH)? This information, taken into consideration with the patient's individual risk, helps guide decisions.

NUMBER NEEDED TO TREAT

NNT is the number of patients who need to be treated for a certain period of time (e.g., one year) in order for one patient to benefit (e.g., avoid HF progression).

NNT FORMULA

$$\text{NNT} = \frac{1}{\text{(risk in control group)} - \text{(risk in treatment group)*}} \quad \text{or} \quad \frac{1}{\text{ARR*}}$$

**Risk and ARR are expressed as decimals*

NNT CALCULATION

The ARR in the metoprolol study was 12%. The duration of the study period was one year. Calculate the number of patients that need to be treated with metoprolol for one year in order to prevent one case of HF progression.

$$\text{NNT} = \frac{1}{0.12} = 8.3, \text{ rounded up to } 9^*$$

**Numbers greater than a whole number are rounded up*

NNT INTERPRETATION

For every 9 patients who receive metoprolol for one year, HF progression is prevented in one patient.

NUMBER NEEDED TO HARM

NNH is the number of patients who need to be treated for a certain period of time in order for one patient to experience harm.

NNT and NNH are calculated with the same formula (see the NNT formula on the previous page). There are two differences:

1. NNT is rounded up, and NNH is rounded down (see Study Tip Gal).
2. The absolute value of the ARR is used with NNH, as shown in the following example.

NNH CALCULATION

A study evaluated the efficacy of clopidogrel versus placebo, both given in addition to aspirin, in reducing the risk of cardiovascular death, MI and stroke. The study reported a 3.9% risk of major bleeding in the treatment group and a 2.8% risk of major bleeding in the control group.

ROUNDING RULES FOR NNT AND NNH

Normal rounding rules do not apply:

- For NNT:
  - Anything greater than a whole number, round up to the next whole number. This avoids overstating the potential benefit of an intervention.
  - Example: NNT of 52.1 → round up to 53
- For NNH:
  - Anything greater than a whole number, round down to the nearest whole number. This avoids understating the potential harm of an intervention.
  - Example: NNH of 41.9 → round down to 41

ARR = 2.8% – 3.9% = –1.1%; the absolute value is the difference between the two groups. There is a 1.1% higher risk of major bleeding in the treatment group.

$$\text{NNH} = \frac{1}{0.011} = 90.9, \text{ rounded down to } 90^*$$

**Numbers greater than a whole number are rounded down*

NNH INTERPRETATION

One additional case of major bleeding is expected to occur in every 90 patients taking clopidogrel instead of placebo.

ODDS RATIO AND HAZARD RATIO

ODDS RATIO

Odds are the probability that an event will occur versus the probability that it will not occur. Case-control studies, described in the Types of Medical Studies section, are not suitable for relative risk calculations. In case-control studies, the odds ratio is used to estimate the risk of unfavorable events associated with an intervention.

Case-control studies enroll patients who have a clinical outcome or disease that has already occurred (e.g., lung cancer). The patient medical charts are reviewed retrospectively (in the past) to search for possible exposures (e.g., smoking) that increased the risk of the clinical outcome or disease. In this case, the odds ratio (OR) is used to calculate the odds of an outcome occurring with an exposure, compared to the odds of the outcome occurring without the exposure. ORs are used most commonly with case-control studies but can be used in cohort and cross-sectional studies.

OR FORMULA

EXPOSURE/ TREATMENT	OUTCOME PRESENT	OUTCOME ABSENT
Present	A	B
Absent	C	D

$$OR = \frac{AD}{BC}$$

A = # that have the outcome, with exposure
B = # without the outcome, with exposure
C = # that have the outcome, without exposure
D = # without the outcome, without exposure

OR CALCULATION

A case-control study was conducted to assess the risk of falls with fracture (outcome) associated with serotonergic antidepressant (AD) use (exposure) among a cohort of Chinese females age ≥ 65 years. Cases were matched with 33,000 controls (1:4, by age, sex and cohort entry date).

EXPOSURE/ TREATMENT	FALLS W/ FRACTURE (CASES)	FALLS W/O FRACTURE (CONTROLS)
Serotonergic AD-YES	4,991	18,270
Serotonergic AD-NO	3,259	14,730

$AD = 4{,}991 \times 14{,}730 = 73{,}517{,}430$

$BC = 18{,}270 \times 3{,}259 = 59{,}541{,}930$

$$OR = \frac{73{,}517{,}430}{59{,}541{,}930} = 1.23$$

Conclusion: serotonergic ADs are associated with a 23% ↑ risk of fall with fracture (see Interpretation on the next page).

HAZARD RATIO

In a survival analysis (e.g. analysis of death or disease progression), instead of using "risk," a hazard rate is used. A hazard rate is the rate at which an unfavorable event occurs within a short period of time. Similar to RR, the hazard ratio (HR) is the ratio between the hazard rate in the treatment and the control group.

HR FORMULA

$$HR = \frac{\text{Hazard rate in the treatment group}}{\text{Hazard rate in the control group}}$$

HR CALCULATION

A placebo-controlled study evaluated whether niacin, when added to statin therapy, reduces cardiovascular risk in patients with established cardiovascular disease. The primary endpoint was the first event of the composite endpoint. A total of 3,414 patients were enrolled and followed for three years. Calculate the hazard ratio.

	NIACIN N = 1,718	PLACEBO N = 1,696
Primary endpoint	282	274

Niacin Hazard Rate	Control Hazard Rate
$\frac{282}{1{,}718} = 0.16$	$\frac{274}{1{,}696} = 0.16$

$$HR = \frac{0.16}{0.16} = 1 \times 100 = 100\%$$

Answer can be expressed as a decimal or a percentage; the exam question will specify with instructions

Conclusion: there is no change in cardiovascular risk when adding niacin to statin therapy (see Interpretation).

OR AND HR INTERPRETATION

OR and HR are interpreted in a similar way to RR:

OR or HR = 1: the event rate is the same in the treatment and control arms. There is no advantage to the treatment.

OR or HR > 1: the event rate in the treatment group is higher than the event rate in the control group; for example, a HR of 2 for an outcome of death indicates there are twice as many deaths in the treatment group.

OR or HR < 1: the event rate in the treatment group is lower than the event rate in the control group; for example, a HR of 0.5 for an outcome of death indicates that there are half as many deaths in the treatment group.

PRIMARY AND COMPOSITE ENDPOINTS

The primary endpoint is the main result that is measured to see if the treatment had a significant benefit. In the metoprolol trial, the primary endpoint was HF progression.

A composite endpoint combines multiple individual endpoints into one measurement. This is attractive to researchers, as combining several endpoints increases the likelihood of reaching a statistically significant benefit with a smaller, less costly trial.

Primary Endpoints (distinct and separate)	**Composite Endpoint (combined into one)**
Death from cardiovascular causes	Death from cardiovascular causes
or	and
Nonfatal stroke	Nonfatal stroke
or	and
Nonfatal MI	Nonfatal MI

When using a composite endpoint, each individual endpoint gets counted toward the same (composite) outcome.

COMPOSITE ENDPOINTS: CAUTION

All endpoints in a composite must be similar in magnitude and have similar, meaningful importance to the patient. For example, the composite endpoint of blood pressure reduction should not be included with heart attack and stroke reduction. When assessing a composite measurement, it is important to use the composite endpoint value, rather than adding together the values for the individual endpoints. The value of the sum of the individual endpoints may not equal the value of the composite endpoint, since a patient can have more than one non-fatal endpoint during a trial.

TYPES OF STATISTICAL TESTS

The next step following data collection (and calculation of risks, RR, ARR, HR, etc.) is to analyze the data to check if differences between the treatment and control groups are statistically significant or if there is an association or relationship in the data. Selecting the correct test to analyze the data depends on the type of data and the outcomes measured.

CONTINUOUS DATA

With continuous data, the type of test used to determine statistical significance depends on the distribution of data (discussed previously). If it is normally distributed, parametric methods are appropriate. If the data is not normally distributed, nonparametric methods are appropriate.

T-TESTS

This is a parametric method used when the endpoint has continuous data and the data is normally distributed. When data from a single sample group is compared with known data from the general population, a one-sample t-test is performed. If a single sample group is used for a pre-/post-measurement (i.e., the patient serves as their own control), a paired t-test is appropriate.

A student t-test is used when the study has two independent samples: the treatment and the control groups. For example, a study comparing the reduction in hemoglobin A1C values between metformin and placebo would use an independent or unpaired student t-test.

ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE

Analysis of variance (ANOVA), or the F-test, is used to test for statistical significance when using continuous data with 3 or more samples, or groups.

DISCRETE (CATEGORICAL) DATA

CHI-SQUARE TEST

For nominal or ordinal data, a chi-square test is used to determine statistical significance between treatment groups. For example, if a study assesses the difference in mortality (nominal data) between two groups, or pain scores based on a pain scale (ordinal data), a chi-square test could be used.

SELECTING A TEST TO ANALYZE THE DATA

NUMBER OF GROUPS	TYPE OF DATA		
	Continuous		Discrete/Categorical
	PARAMETRIC TESTS (data has normal distribution)	NON-PARAMETRIC TESTS (data has skewed distribution)	
1	One-sample t-test	Sign test	Chi-square test
1 (with before & after measures)	Dependent/paired t-test	Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test	Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test
2 (treatment & control)	Independent/unpaired student t-test	Mann-Whitney (Wilcoxon Rank-Sum) test	Chi-square or Fisher's exact test Mann-Whitney (Wilcoxon Rank-Sum) test (may be preferred for ordinal data)
≥ 3	ANOVA (or F-test)	Kruskal-Wallis test	Kruskal-Wallis test

EXAMPLES OF TEST TYPE SELECTION

EXAMPLE 1

A study is performed to assess the safety and efficacy of ketamine-dexmedetomidine (KD) versus ketamine-propofol (KP) for sedation in patients after coronary artery bypass graft surgery.

ENDPOINT (MEANS)	KD	KP
Fentanyl dose, mcg	41.94 ± 20.43	152.8 ± 51.2
Weaning/extubation time, min	374.05 ± 20.25	445.23 ± 21.7

Measurements of dose and time are both continuous data. The trial has two independent samples, or groups (KD and KP). An appropriate test is an independent/unpaired student t-test. If the trial included a third group, ANOVA would be used.

EXAMPLE 2

An emergency medical team wants to see if there is a statistically significant difference in death due to multiple drug overdose with at least one opioid taken, versus no opioid taken. Which test can determine a statistically significant difference in death?

ENDPOINT	YES OPIOID N = 250	NO OPIOID N = 150
Death (n, %)	52 (20.8%)	35 (23.3%)

The variable (dead or alive) is nominal. The chi-square test is used to test for significance when there are two groups.

CORRELATION AND REGRESSION

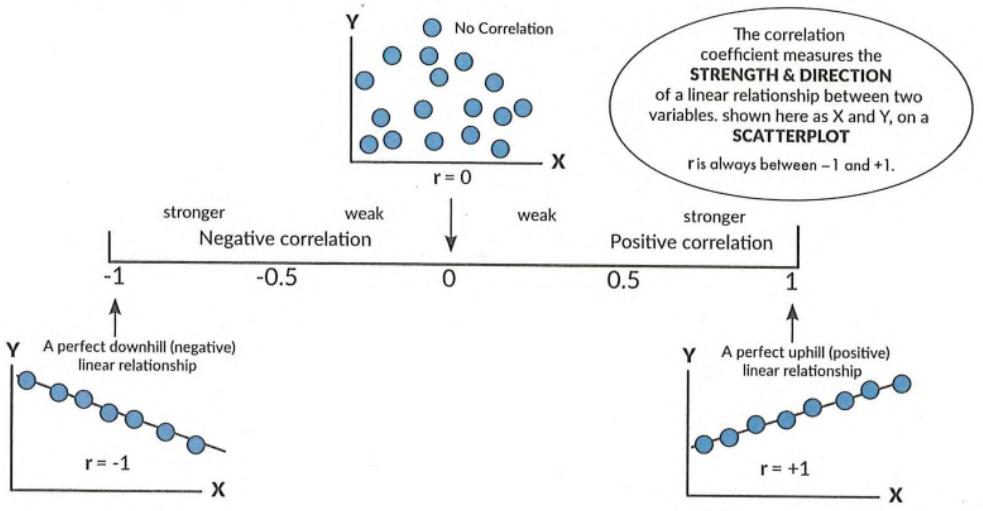
CORRELATION

Correlation is a statistical technique used to determine if one variable (such as number of days hospitalized) changes, or is related to, another variable (such as incidence of hospital-acquired infection). When the independent variable (number of hospital days) causes the dependent variable (infections) to increase, the direction of the correlation is positive (increases to the right). When the independent variable causes the dependent variable to decrease, the direction of the correlation is negative (decreases to the right).

Different types of data require different tests for correlation. Spearman's rank-order correlation, referred to as Rho, is used to test correlation with ordinal, ranked data. The primary test used for continuous data is the Pearson's correlation coefficient, denoted as *r,* which is a calculated score that indicates the strength and direction of the relationship between two variables. The values range from −1 to +1, and are described in the figure on the next page.

It is not possible to conclude from a correlation analysis that the change in a variable causes the change in another variable. A correlation, whether positive or negative, does not prove a causal relationship.

TESTING FOR CORRELATION WITH THE PEARSON CORRELATION COEFFICIENT



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REGRESSION

Regression is used to describe the relationship between a dependent variable and one or more independent (or explanatory) variables, or how much the value of the dependent variable changes when the independent variables changes. Regression is common in observational studies where researchers need to assess multiple independent variables or need to control for many confounding factors. There are three typical types of regressions: 1) linear, for continuous data, 2) logistic, for categorical data, and 3) Cox regression, for categorical data in a survival analysis.

SENSITIVITY AND SPECIFICITY

Lab and diagnostic tests can screen for and diagnose medical conditions. Sensitivity and specificity are used to describe how well a test performs with respect to identifying patients with or without a condition, respectively.

SENSITIVITY, THE TRUE POSITIVE

Sensitivity describes how effectively a test identifies patients with the condition. The higher the sensitivity, the better; a test with 100% sensitivity will be positive in all patients with the condition. Sensitivity is calculated from the number of patients who test positive and have the condition (true positives) and the number who test negative but have the condition (false negatives). In other words, sensitivity is the percentage of "true-positive" results.

SPECIFICITY, THE TRUE NEGATIVE

Specificity describes how effectively a test identifies patients without the condition. The higher the specificity the better; a test with 100% specificity will be negative in all patients without the condition. Specificity is calculated from the number who test negative without the condition (true negatives) and the number who test positive but do not have the condition (false positives). In other words, specificity is the percentage of "true-negative" results.

SENSITIVITY AND SPECIFICITY FORMULA

TEST RESULT	HAVE CONDITION	NO CONDITION
Positive	True positives (TP)	False positives (FP)
Negative	False negatives (FN)	True negatives (TN)
Total	TP + FN	FP + TN

$$\text{Sensitivity} = \frac{TP}{TP + FN} \times 100$$

$$\text{Specificity} = \frac{TN}{TN + FP} \times 100$$

SENSITIVITY AND SPECIFICITY CALCULATION AND INTERPRETATION

The tables below show how sensitivity and specificity are calculated for two lab tests used in the diagnosis of rheumatoid arthritis (RA), cyclic citrulline peptide (CCP) and rheumatoid factor (RF), which are compared to a gold standard to determine true positives and true negatives. Based on study data, CCP has a sensitivity of 98% and a specificity of 98% for RA, while RF has a sensitivity of 28% and a specificity of 87%.

Using the RF lab test as an example, a sensitivity of 28% means that only 28% of patients with the condition will have a positive RF result; the test is negative in 72% of patients with the disease (and the diagnosis can be missed). A specificity of 87% means that the test is negative in 87% of patients without the disease; but 13% of patients without the disease can test positive (potentially causing an incorrect diagnosis).

CCP RESULTS	HAVE CONDITION	NO CONDITION
Positive	147	9
Negative	3	441
Total	150	450
Sensitivity	147/150 × 100 = 98%	
Specificity		441/450 × 100 = 98%

RF RESULTS	HAVE CONDITION	NO CONDITION
Positive	21	26
Negative	54	174
Total	75	200
Sensitivity	21/75 × 100 = 28%	
Specificity		174/200 × 100 = 87%

SENSITIVITY AND SPECIFICITY APPLICATION

If a patient with swollen finger joints is referred to a rheumatologist and lab tests reveal a positive CCP and a negative RF, the positive CCP indicates a strong likelihood that the patient has RA because it has higher specificity (lower risk of false positives); RF has a lower sensitivity (higher risk of false negatives). If the RF is positive and the CCP is negative, the rheumatologist would consider other conditions that contribute to swollen joints because of the lower specificity of RF (higher risk of false positives); CCP has a high sensitivity, which translates to lower false negatives.

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE PREDICTIVE VALUE

Positive and negative predictive value (PPV and NPV) are used to describe the probability that a positive or negative result truly indicates that a patient does or does not have the disease, respectively. In other words, if a result is positive, a PPV tells you the probability that the patient actually has the disease; if a result is negative, NPV tells you the probability that the patient does not have the disease. Therefore, a test with a high NPV that results as negative is very likely to be a true negative; a test with a high PPV that results as positive is very likely to be a true positive. Like sensitivity and specificity, NPV and PPV are calculated from the tables above, but it is unlikely these will need to be calculated on the exam.

INTENTION-TO-TREAT AND PER PROTOCOL ANALYSIS

Data from clinical trials can be analyzed in two different ways; intention-to-treat or per protocol. Intention-to-treat analysis includes data for all patients originally allocated to each treatment group (active and control) even if the patient did not complete the trial according to the study protocol (e.g., due to non-compliance, protocol violations or study withdrawal). This method provides a conservative (real-world) estimate of the treatment effect. A per protocol analysis is conducted for the subset of the trial population who completed the study according to the protocol (or at least without any major protocol violations). This method can provide an optimistic estimate of treatment effect since it is limited to the subset of patients who were adherent to the protocol.

NONINFERIORITY AND EQUIVALENCE TRIAL DESIGNS

The standard design of most trials is to establish that a treatment is superior to another treatment; the researcher wishes to show that the new drug is better than the old drug or placebo. Perhaps a new treatment is developed that is less expensive or less toxic than the standard of care. Researchers would hope to demonstrate that the new drug is roughly equivalent, or at least not inferior, to the standard of care. Two types of trials are used for this purpose: equivalence and non-inferiority trials.

Equivalence trials attempt to demonstrate that the new treatment has roughly the same effect as the old (or reference) treatment. These trials test for effect in two directions, for higher or lower effectiveness, which is called a two-way margin. Non-inferiority trials attempt to demonstrate that the new treatment is no worse than the current standard based on the predefined non-inferiority (delta) margin. The delta margin is the minimal difference in effect between the two groups that is considered clinically acceptable based on previous research.

FOREST PLOTS AND CONFIDENCE INTERVALS

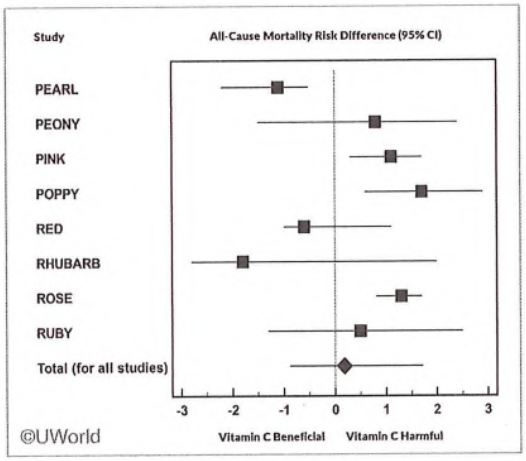
Forest plots are graphs that have a "forest" of lines. Forest plots can be used for a single study in which individual endpoints are pooled (gathered together) into a composite endpoint (see figure labeled Pogue, et al. on the next page). More commonly, forest plots are used when the results from multiple studies are pooled into a single study, such as with a meta-analysis (see figure below on comparing difference data).

Forest plots provide CIs for difference data or ratio data. Interpreting forest plots correctly can help identify whether a statistically significant benefit has been reached. When interpreting statistical significance using a forest plot:

- The boxes show the effect estimate. In a meta-analysis, the size of the box correlates with the size of the effect from the single study shown. Diamonds (at the bottom of the forest plot) represent pooled results from multiple studies.
- The horizontal lines through the boxes illustrate the length of the confidence interval for that particular endpoint (in a single study) or for the particular study (in a meta-analysis). The longer the line, the wider the interval, and the less reliable the study results. The width of the diamond in a meta-analysis serves the same purpose.
- The vertical solid line is the line of no effect; a significant benefit has been reached when data falls to the left of the line; data to the right of the line indicates significant harm. The vertical line is set at zero for difference data and at one for ratio data.

COMPARING DIFFERENCE DATA

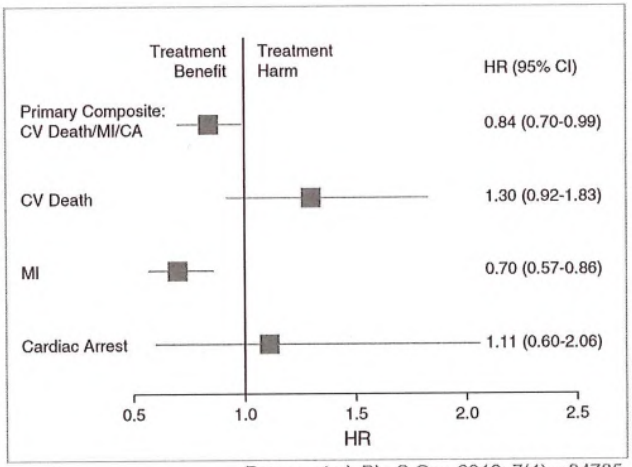
The study shown to the right (a meta-analysis) uses a forest plot to display the difference in all-cause mortality risk for each individual study, and the pooled result of the studies. Recall for difference data, a result is not statistically significant if the confidence interval crosses zero, so the vertical line (line of no difference) is set at zero. Examples:



- 1st study (PEARL): shows a statistically significant benefit; the data point, plus the entire confidence interval, is to the left of the vertical line and does not cross zero.
- 2nd study (PEONY): the result is not statistically significant; the confidence interval crosses zero.
- 3rd study (PINK): shows a statistically significant harmful outcome; the data point, plus the entire confidence interval, is all to the right of the vertical line and does not cross zero.

COMPARING RATIO DATA

The study shown to the right (by Pogue, et al.) uses a forest plot to show the results of a composite endpoint reported as ratio data, in this case hazard ratio. Recall for ratio data, the result is not statistically significant if the confidence interval crosses one, so the vertical line (line of no difference) is set at one. Examples:



Pogue, et al. PLoS One 2012; 7(4): e34785.

- Primary composite endpoint: a statistically significant benefit was shown with treatment; the CI (0.7 – 0.99) does not cross one (and the horizontal line representing the CI does not touch or cross the vertical line at one).
- CV death: shows no statistically significant benefit (or harm); the CI (0.92 – 1.83) crosses one (and the horizontal line representing the CI crosses the vertical line at one).

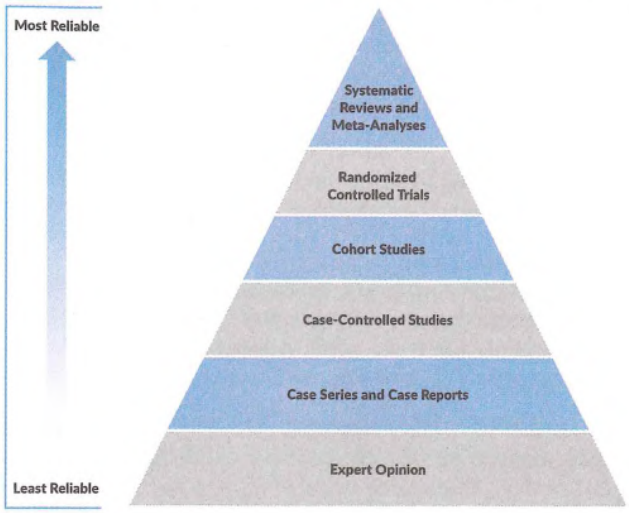
TYPES OF MEDICAL STUDIES

Evidence-based medicine (EBM), which is largely guideline and protocol-driven, is the foundation of practice and most patient care recommendations are based on valid study data.

The type of study that a researcher chooses is a major factor in determining the quality of the study data and the clinical value or impact. The pyramid figure to the right depicts the reliability of each of the major study types.

Common types of studies include:

- Case-control studies: retrospective comparisons of cases (patients with a disease) and controls (patients without a disease).
- Cohort studies: retrospective or prospective comparisons of patients with an exposure to those without an exposure.
- Randomized controlled trials: prospective comparison of patients randomly assigned to groups.
- Meta-analyses: analyzes results of multiple studies.



Each type of study has benefits and limitations. The following table describes the study types and provides an example of each study.

STUDY TYPE, BENEFITS AND LIMITATIONS	STUDY TYPE EXAMPLE
CASE-CONTROL STUDY Compares patients with a disease (cases) to those without the disease (controls). The outcome of the cases and controls is already known, but the researcher looks back in time (retrospectively) to see if a relationship exists between the disease (outcome) and various risk factors. **Benefits** Data is easy to get from medical records. Good for looking at outcomes when the intervention is unethical (e.g., exposing patients to a pesticide to test an association with cancer; cases that occurred are used instead). Less expensive than a RCT. **Limitations** Cause and effect cannot reliably be determined (associations may be proven non-existent).	***Predictors of surgical site infection after open lower extremity bypass (LEB) revascularization.*** **Methods** Data was pulled from 35 hospitals for all patients who had LEB during a 3-year period. Cases of surgical site infection (SSI) were identified and compared to those who did not develop an SSI (controls). An odds ratio (OR) was calculated for various risk factors that might increase SSI risk. **Statistical Data** Renal failure OR: 4.35 (95% CI 3.45-5.47; $p < 0.001$). Hypertension OR: 4.29 (95% CI 2.74-6.72; $p < 0.001$). BMI ≥ 25 kg/m^2 OR: 1.78 (95% CI 1.23-2.57; $p = 0.002$). **Conclusion** Renal failure, hypertension and BMI ≥ 25 kg/m^2 were all associated with an increased risk of SSI.

STUDY TYPE, BENEFITS AND LIMITATIONS	STUDY TYPE EXAMPLE
COHORT STUDY Compares outcomes of a group of patients exposed and not exposed to a treatment; the researcher follows both groups prospectively (in the future) or retrospectively (less common) to see if they develop the outcome. **Benefits** Good for looking at outcomes when the intervention would be unethical. **Limitations** More time-consuming and expensive than a retrospective study. Can be influenced by confounders, which are other factors that affect the outcome (e.g., smoking, lipid levels).	***Statin use and cognitive function in adults with type 1 diabetes.*** **Methods** Patients with type 1 diabetes who were taking statins (exposed) were compared to those not taking statins (not exposed) and followed for 7-12 years to see if statin use was associated with cognitive impairment (outcome). **Statistical Data** Statin use and odds of cognitive impairment OR: 4.84 (95% CI 1.63-14.44; p = 0.005). **Conclusion** In type 1 diabetes, patients taking statins were more likely to develop cognitive impairment compared to those who did not take statins.
CROSS-SECTIONAL SURVEY Estimates the relationship between variables and outcomes (prevalence) at one particular time (cross-section) in a defined population. **Benefits** Can identify associations that need further study (hypothesis-generating). **Limitations** Does not determine causality (further studies needed if association found).	***Association of selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors and bone mineral density (BMD) in elderly women.*** **Methods** A cross-sectional analysis of 250 elderly women (defined population) from August 2010 to April 2015 (time period) was performed. Data was collected retrospectively for two groups: SSRI users (variable) and SSRI nonusers (variable) to compare the prevalence of low BMD. **Statistical Data** No difference in the prevalence of low BMD at the femoral neck (p = 0.887) or the spine (p = 0.275). **Conclusion** There was no difference in the prevalence of low BMD between elderly women on SSRIs and not on SSRIs.
CASE REPORT AND CASE SERIES Describes an adverse reaction or a unique condition that appears in a single patient (case report) or a few patients (case series). The outcome of the case in each of these is already known. A case series is more reliable than a case report. **Benefits** Can identify new diseases, drug side effects or potential uses. Generates hypotheses that can be tested with other study designs. **Limitations** Conclusions cannot be drawn from a single or few cases.	***Tardive oculogyric crisis during treatment with clozapine: report of three cases.*** **Methods** A psychiatrist identified three cases of patients at his center who experienced the adverse effect, wrote it up, and it was printed in a medical journal. **Statistical Data** No statistical validity; risk cannot be compared to the general population as there is no control. **Conclusion** The findings of oculogyric crisis in patients treated with clozapine are interesting but do not provide important information on prevalence.

STUDY TYPE, BENEFITS AND LIMITATIONS	STUDY TYPE EXAMPLE
RANDOMIZED CONTROLLED TRIAL (RCT) Compares an experimental treatment to a control (placebo or existing treatment) to determine which is better. Subjects with the desired characteristics (inclusion criteria) are carefully selected, and patients with characteristics that may influence the outcome are excluded (exclusion criteria). Patients are randomized (have an equal chance of being assigned to the treatment or control group) and sometimes blinded (unaware if they are receiving treatment or control). Common types of blinding designs include: ■ Double-blind: both the patient and the investigator are unaware of the treatment assignment. ■ Single-blind: the patient is unaware of the treatment assignment, but the investigator knows. ■ Open label (or unblinded): all parties know which treatment is being given to the patient. **Benefits** Preferred study type to determine cause and effect or superiority. Less potential for bias. **Limitations** Time-consuming and expensive. May not reflect real-life scenarios (when rigorous exclusion criteria are used).	***Angiotensin-neprilysin inhibition versus enalapril in heart failure (PARADIGM-HF study).*** **Methods** Patients with heart failure were randomized in a double-blind manner to receive a new drug (angiotensin-neprilysin inhibitor) or the current standard of care (enalapril). The effectiveness of the treatments was measured as a primary composite outcome of death from cardiovascular causes or hospitalization for heart failure. **Statistical Data** Primary outcome HR: 0.8 (95% CI 0.73-0.87, $p < 0.001$). **Conclusion** The new drug demonstrated a statistically significant benefit in reducing death from cardiovascular causes or hospitalizations due to heart failure. The null hypothesis (that there was no difference between the two arms) was rejected.
PARALLEL RCT Subjects are randomized to the treatment or control arm for the entire study.	The PARADIGM-HF study (discussed above) is an example of a parallel study design and is the most common type of RCT.
CROSSOVER RCT Patients are randomized to one of two sequential treatments: Group 1 – receive treatment A first, then crossover (change) to treatment B. Group 2 – receive treatment B first, then crossover (change) to treatment A. **Benefits** Patients serve as their own control; this minimizes the effects from confounders. **Limitations** A washout period is needed to minimize the influence of the first drug during the second treatment.	***Crossover comparison of timolol and latanoprost in chronic primary angle-closure glaucoma.*** **Methods** Patients with chronic primary angle-closure glaucoma were randomized after surgery to latanoprost or timolol. Three months after treatment with the first drug, the second drug was substituted. Intraocular pressure (IOP) was recorded before starting and at 3 and 7 months in both groups. **Statistical Data** Decrease in IOP from baseline was 8.2 ± 2 mmHg with latanoprost ($p < 0.001$) and 6.1 ± 1.7 mmHg with timolol ($p = 0.01$). **Conclusion** Latanoprost was associated with a greater decrease in IOP from baseline than timolol.

STUDY TYPE, BENEFITS AND LIMITATIONS	STUDY TYPE EXAMPLE
FACTORIAL DESIGN Randomizes to more than the usual two groups to test a number of experimental conditions. **Benefits** Evaluates multiple interventions (multiple drugs or dosing regimens) in a single experiment. **Limitations** With each arm added, more subjects are needed to have adequate power.	***Prednisolone or pentoxifylline for alcoholic hepatitis.*** **Methods** A 2-by-2 factorial design was used to evaluate the effect of prednisolone or pentoxifylline on 28-day mortality in patients with alcoholic hepatitis. Patients were randomized to 1 of 4 groups: prednisolone (PR)-pentoxifylline (PE), PR-placebo, PE-placebo, or placebo-placebo. **Statistical Data** Pentoxifylline (PE-PR and PE-placebo groups) OR: 1.04 (95% CI 0.77-1.49; p = 0.69). Prednisolone (PR-placebo) OR: 0.72 (95% CI 0.52-1.01; p = 0.06). **Conclusion** Pentoxifylline (alone or in combination with prednisolone) and prednisolone alone did not reduce mortality in patients with alcoholic hepatitis.
META-ANALYSIS Combines results from multiple studies in order to develop a conclusion that has greater statistical power than is possible from the individual smaller studies. **Benefits** Smaller studies can be pooled instead of performing a large, expensive study. See previous forest plot explanation for how data can be presented. **Limitations** Studies may not be uniform (size, inclusion and exclusion criteria, etc). Validity can be compromised if lower quality studies are weighted equally to higher quality studies.	***Antioxidants for chronic kidney disease (CKD).*** **Methods** The authors searched the PubMed database to locate studies investigating the use of antioxidants in people with CKD. Ten studies were identified, and the results were pooled to determine whether antioxidants had an effect on cardiovascular disease and mortality in patients with CKD. **Statistical Data** Antioxidant use and cardiovascular disease RR: 0.78 (95% CI 0.52-1.18; p = 0.24). All-cause mortality RR: 0.93 (95% CI 0.76-1.14; p = 0.48). **Conclusion** Antioxidant use did not reduce cardiovascular disease or mortality in patients with CKD.
SYSTEMATIC REVIEW ARTICLE Summary of the clinical literature that focuses on a specific topic or question (e.g., treatment options for a condition). Begins with a question followed by a literature search, then the information is summarized, and sometimes includes a meta-analysis to synthesize results. **Benefits** Inexpensive (studies already exist).	***The evolving treatment landscape of advanced renal cell carcinoma (RCC) in patients progressing after VEGF inhibition.*** **Methods** It is still unclear which patients benefit most from VEGF and mTOR inhibitors and the ideal sequence, timing and duration of therapy. The review wanted to define the appropriate treatment sequence after first-line treatment failure. **Statistical Data** No statistical tests reported. **Conclusion** There are no predictive biomarkers that determine the best therapy for the right patient or the best sequence of treatment. More studies are needed.

PHARMACOECONOMICS

BACKGROUND

Healthcare costs in the United States rank among the highest of all industrialized countries. In 2017, total healthcare expenditures reached $3.5 trillion, which translates to an average of $10,739 per person, or about 17.9% of the national gross domestic product. The increasing costs have highlighted the need to understand how limited resources can be used most effectively and efficiently in the care of individual patients and society as a whole. It is necessary to evaluate the value (i.e., costs vs. outcomes) of medical procedures or drugs.

DEFINITIONS

Pharmacoeconomics is a collection of descriptive and analytic techniques to evaluate interventions (e.g., drugs, devices, procedures) in the healthcare system. Pharmacoeconomic research identifies, measures and compares the costs (direct, indirect and intangible) and the consequences (clinical, economic and humanistic) of pharmaceutical products and services.

Various research methods can be used to determine the impact of a pharmaceutical product or service. These methods include cost-effectiveness analysis, cost-minimization analysis, cost-utility analysis and cost-benefit analysis. The term "pharmacoeconomics" is sometimes referred to as "outcomes research," but they are not the same thing. Pharmacoeconomic methods are specific to assessing the costs and consequences of pharmaceutical products and services. Outcomes research represents a broader research discipline that attempts to identify, measure and evaluate the end result of healthcare services.

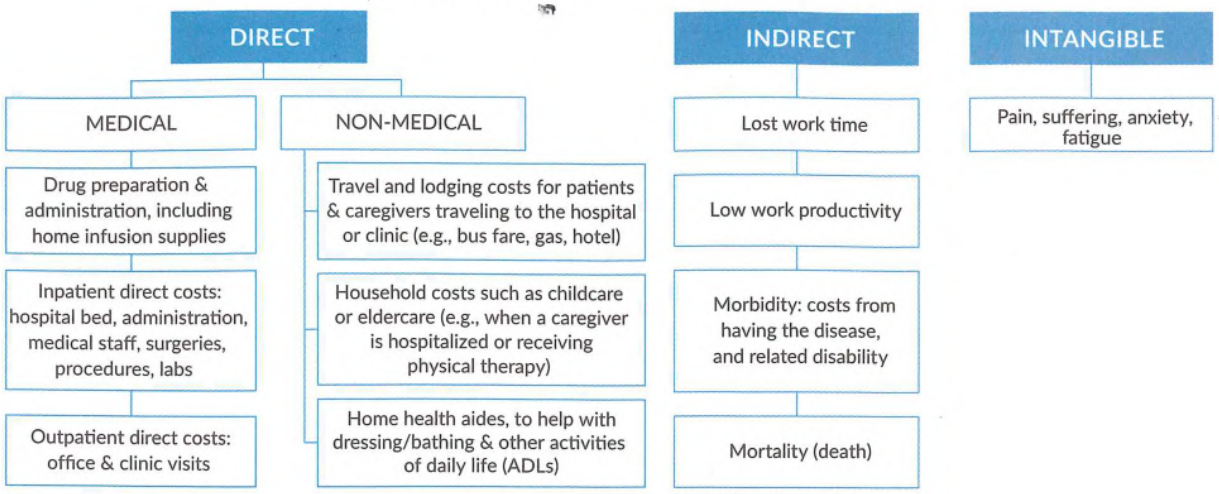
Healthcare providers, payers and other decision makers use these methods to evaluate and compare the total costs and consequences of pharmaceutical products and services. The results of pharmacoeconomic analyses can vary significantly based on the point of view of the analyst; the study perspective is critical for interpretation. What may be viewed as good value for society or for the patient may not be deemed as such from an institutional or provider perspective (e.g., the costs of lost productivity due to illness are critically important to a patient or employer, but perhaps less so to a health plan).

Pharmacoeconomic analyses provide supplemental evidence to traditional efficacy and safety endpoints. They translate important clinical benefits into economic and patient-centered terms, and assist providers and payers in determining where, or if, a drug fits into the treatment paradigm for a specific condition. Pharmacoeconomic studies serve to guide optimal healthcare resource allocation in a standardized and evidence-based manner.

The ECHO model (Economic, Clinical and Humanistic Outcomes) provides a broad evaluative framework to assess the outcomes associated with diseases and treatments.

- Economic outcomes: direct, indirect and intangible costs of the drug compared to a medical intervention.
- Clinical outcomes: medical events that occur as a result of the treatment or intervention.
- Humanistic Outcomes: consequences of the disease or treatment as reported by the patient or caregiver (e.g., patient satisfaction, quality of life).

MEDICAL COST CATEGORIES: DIRECT, INDIRECT AND INTANGIBLE



AVERAGE AND INCREMENTAL COST-EFFECTIVENESS RATIOS

The results of a pharmacoeconomic analysis are commonly expressed in terms of a cost ratio, representing the costs incurred to achieve a particular outcome [e.g., cost per case cured, cost per treatment success, cost per quality-adjusted life year (QALY) gained]. Two fundamental cost ratios are commonly used to communicate results of a pharmacoeconomic analysis.

AVERAGE COST-EFFECTIVENESS RATIOS

Average cost-effectiveness ratios reflect the cost per outcome of one treatment independent of other treatment alternatives. For example, if a treatment costs $50 to generate successful outcomes in two patients, the average cost-effectiveness ratio is $25/treatment success ($50/2 successfully treated patients).

INCREMENTAL COST-EFFECTIVENESS RATIOS

Incremental cost-effectiveness ratios represent the change in costs and outcomes when two treatments are compared. An incremental cost-effectiveness ratio is calculated when evaluating costs and outcomes between competing alternatives, and represents the additional costs required to produce an additional unit of effect. It is calculated as shown to the right, where C is for costs and E is for effects.

$$\text{Incremental Cost Ratio} = \frac{(C_2 - C_1)}{(E_2 - E_1)}$$

- Example: if spending $200 on Drug A results in 5 treatment successes while spending $300 on Drug B results in 7 treatment successes, what is the incremental cost ratio?

$$\text{Incremental Cost Ratio} = \frac{(\$300 - \$200)}{(7 - 5)} = \frac{\$100}{2} = \$50$$

Conclusion: Drug B costs $50 more relative to Drug A for each additional treatment success.

PHARMACOECONOMIC METHODOLOGIES

COST-MINIMIZATION ANALYSIS

Cost-minimization analysis (CMA) is used when two or more interventions have demonstrated equivalence in outcomes, and the costs of each intervention are being compared. CMA measures and compares the input costs of treatment alternatives that have equivalent outcomes. This determination of equivalence is a key consideration in adopting this methodology. Ideally, evidence exists to support the clinical equivalence of the alternatives. In some instances, assumptions are made in the absence of relevant evidence.

For example, two ACE inhibitors, captopril and lisinopril, are considered therapeutically equivalent in the literature, but the acquisition cost (the price paid for the drug) and administrative costs may be different (captopril is administered TID and lisinopril is administered once daily). A CMA looks at "minimizing costs" when drugs have equal efficacy and tolerability. Another example of CMA is looking at the same drug regimen given in two different settings (e.g., hospital versus home health care). CMA is considered the easiest analysis to perform, but use of this method is limited given its ability to compare only options with demonstrated equivalent outcomes.

COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS

Cost-benefit analysis (CBA) is a systematic process for calculating and comparing benefits and costs of an intervention in terms of monetary units (dollars). CBA consists of identifying all the benefits from an intervention and converting them into dollars in the year that they will occur. The costs associated with the intervention are identified, allocated to the year when they occur, and then discounted back to their present day value. Given that all other factors remain constant, the program with the largest present day value of benefits minus costs is the best economic value. In CBA, it can be difficult to assign a dollar amount to a benefit (e.g., measuring the benefit of patient quality of life, which is difficult to quantify, and assigning a dollar value to it). One advantage to using CBA is the ability to determine if the benefits of the intervention exceed the costs of implementation. CBA can be used to compare programs for similar or unrelated outcomes, as long as the outcome measures can be converted to dollars.

COST-EFFECTIVENESS ANALYSIS

Cost-effectiveness analysis (CEA) is used to compare the clinical effects of two or more interventions to the respective costs. The resources associated with the intervention are usually measured in dollars, and clinical outcomes are usually measured in natural health units (e.g., LDL values in mg/dL, % clinical cures, length of stay). The main advantage of this method is that the outcomes are easier to quantify when compared to other analyses, and clinicians are familiar with these types of outcomes since they are similar to outcomes seen in clinical trials and practice. CEA is the most common pharmacoeconomic methodology in biomedical literature.

A disadvantage of CEA is the inability to directly compare different types of outcomes. For example, one cannot compare the cost-effectiveness of implementing a diabetes program with implementing an asthma program where the outcome units are different (e.g., blood glucose values versus asthma exacerbations). It is also difficult to combine two or more outcomes into one value of measurement (e.g., comparing one chemotherapeutic agent that prolongs survival, but has significant side effects, to another chemotherapeutic agent that has less effect on prolonging survival but fewer side effects).

COST-UTILITY ANALYSIS

Cost-utility analysis (CUA) is a specialized form of CEA that includes a quality-of-life component of morbidity assessments, using common health indices such as quality-adjusted life years (QALYs) and disability-adjusted life years (DALYs). CEA can measure the quantity of life (years gained) but not the "quality" or "utility" of those years. In CUA, the intervention outcome is measured in terms of QALYs gained. QALY takes into account both the quality (morbidity) and the quantity (mortality) of life gained.

CUA measures outcomes based on years of life that are adjusted by utility weights, which range from 1 for "perfect health" to 0 for "dead." These weights can take into account patient and society preferences for specific health states. There is no consensus on the measurement, since both patient and society preferences can vary based on culture. An advantage of CUA is that different types of outcomes, and diseases with multiple outcomes of interest, can be compared (unlike CEA which can only compare one common unit).

FOUR BASIC PHARMACOECONOMIC METHODOLOGIES

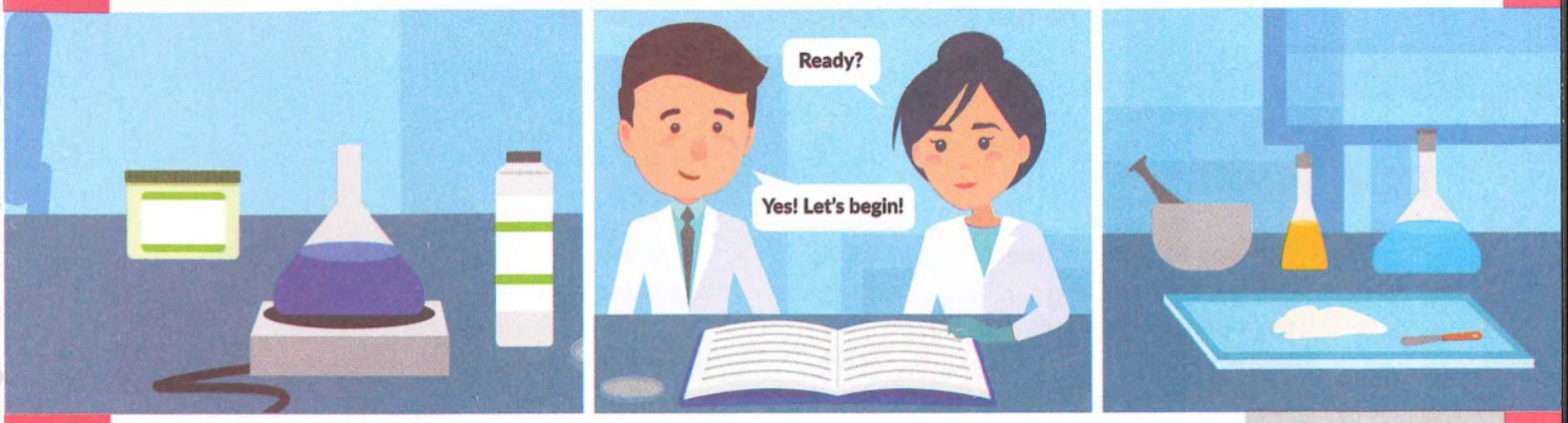
METHODOLOGY	COST MEASUREMENT UNIT	OUTCOME UNIT
Cost-minimization analysis	Dollars	Demonstrated or assumed to be equivalent in comparative groups
Cost-benefit analysis	Dollars	Dollars
Cost-effectiveness analysis	Dollars	Natural units (e.g., life-years gained, mmHg blood pressure, % at treatment goal)
Cost-utility analysis	Dollars	Quality-adjusted-life year (QALY) or other utilities

HEALTH-RELATED QUALITY OF LIFE

Health-related quality of life (HRQOL) refers to the effects of a disease and its treatment on a patient's function and well-being, as perceived by that individual. It is commonly included under a broad umbrella of assessments known as patient-reported outcomes (PROs). HRQOL is comprised of several important domains, including physical and mental functioning, role functioning, vitality, social functioning and general health perceptions.

HRQOL assessments can provide important patient-centered information related to the effects of a disease or treatment on patient functioning and well-being. These assessments are typically developed as either general health status instruments that can be used across a number of disease areas (e.g., the SF-36 Health Survey can be used for asthma, diabetes and other conditions) or disease-specific measures applicable to a limited disease population (e.g., the Asthma Quality of Life Questionnaire). Prior to their use in practice, it is critical that the reliability and validity of HRQOL assessments in specific patient populations has been documented.

COMPOUNDING & HAZARDOUS DRUGS



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CHAPTER 15

NONSTERILE COMPOUNDING

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= Study Tip Gal = Required Formula

INTRODUCTION TO COMPOUNDING

Compounding is a process of combining or altering ingredients to create a medication. Most compounded drugs are prepared for an individual patient based on a prescription. Compounded drugs meet unique needs and are not FDA-approved. The dose or formulation cannot be commercially available as a manufactured product.

TYPES OF COMPOUNDING

Depending on where in the body the drug is intended to be delivered, drugs are compounded as either nonsterile or sterile preparations. Compounds are categorized further as either nonhazardous or hazardous (see Study Tip Gal below) based on the drug in the compound (e.g., the drug causes cancer or reproductive toxicity).

COMPOUNDING STANDARDS AND RESOURCES

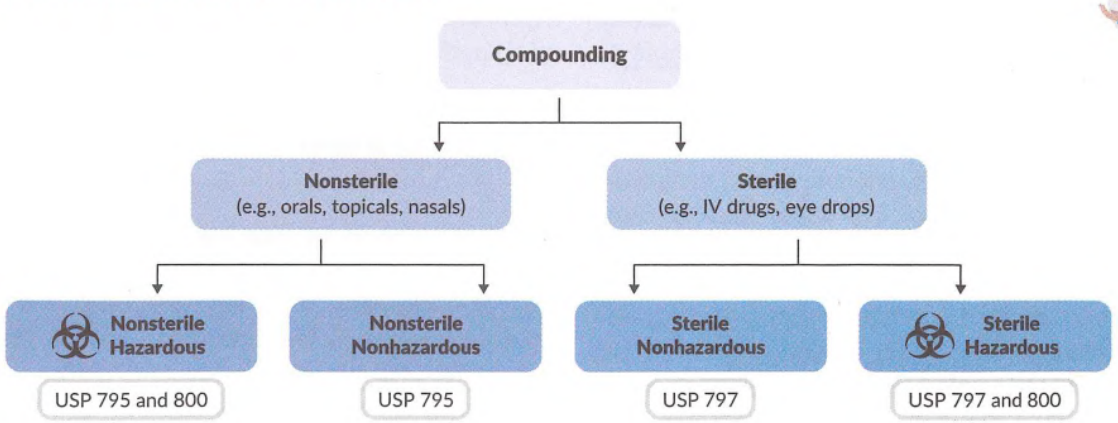
U.S. PHARMACOPEIA

The U.S. Pharmacopeia (USP) sets the standards for compounding. Information is divided into chapters; chapters numbered below 1,000 are required and chapters numbered 1,000 and above are informational. USP chapters related to compounding include:

- USP 795 – Nonsterile Preparations
- USP 797 – Sterile Preparations
- USP 800 – Hazardous Drugs – Handling in Healthcare Settings

The USP chapters are considered to be the minimum acceptable standards by the FDA, state boards of pharmacy and the Joint Commission. USP standards apply to all who engage in compounding (e.g., pharmacy staff, nurses, physicians) in any practice setting (e.g., hospitals, clinics, pharmacies, veterinary offices). USP also sets standards for ingredient quality, purity and strength.

USP COMPOUNDING CHAPTERS



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NONSTERILE COMPOUNDING

Compounded nonsterile preparations (CNSPs) include those administered orally, via tube (e.g., gastric tube), rectally, vaginally, topically, nasally or in the ear (unless the eardrum is perforated).

Nonsterile compounding is primarily used to:

- Prepare a dose or formulation that is not commercially available, such as:
  - Changing a solid tablet to a liquid for a patient who cannot swallow the tablet
  - Diluting a 10% ointment to 5%
- Avoid an excipient (e.g., gluten, red dye)
- Add a flavor to make a medication more palatable (e.g., a cherry-flavored suspension for a child)

Splitting tablets, repackaging or reconstituting a manufactured product (according to the manufacturer's labeling) are not considered compounding. Use of compounding kits, which contain pre-measured ingredients to compound a product, is considered compounding.

SPACE REQUIREMENTS

Nonsterile compounding can be performed in ambient air (room air), but must be separated from the dispensing part of the pharmacy. The nonsterile compounding space must be specifically designated.

Adequate space with shelving and storage is needed to avoid mix-ups of ingredients, containers and other equipment. All ingredients, equipment and containers must be stored off the floor. The space must be clean and well-lit, and should not be carpeted. Heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems must be controlled to avoid drug deterioration. Temperature should be monitored daily (or continuously). A spill kit must be readily available and personnel trained on use.

Adequate plumbing is required and a clean, easily accessible sink with hot and cold water. Purified water, distilled water or reverse osmosis water are needed for rinsing equipment and utensils.

COMPOUNDING PERSONNEL

There must be a designated person (or people) responsible for overseeing the performance and operation of the compounding facility and personnel (i.e., staff) involved.

TRAINING

Personnel must have proper training documented for each type of compounding they perform.

Training, with demonstrated proficiency in certain core competencies, must be completed initially and every 12 months. Core competencies include hand hygiene, garbing, cleaning, use of equipment, measuring and mixing, and documentation of compounding.

GARBING

Personal hygiene and garb are needed to reduce the risk of contaminating CNSPs. A compounder must remove jewelry, personal garments (e.g., hats) and headphones to maintain cleanliness, and they must notify the designated person if they have any concerns for contamination (e.g., upper respiratory infection, rash, conjunctivitis).

When entering the compounding area, the compounder must complete hand hygiene with soap and water for ≥ 30 seconds. Gloves are required; other garb is determined by the facility and type of compounding being performed.

EQUIPMENT

Equipment should be kept clean, in proper working order and free from contamination, and must be calibrated regularly to confirm accuracy. For some types of equipment, the calibration can be frequent (e.g., electronic balances calibrated routinely before use). Complex equipment can require calibration by an outside expert.

Equipment should be made of material that does not react with the compounding ingredients (e.g., metal spatulas should not be used with compounds containing metal ions).

All measurements should be in the metric system.

WEIGHING EQUIPMENT

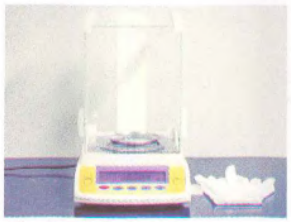
BALANCES

There are two types of balances used to weigh ingredients. The older balance is a Class III torsion balance (also called a Class A balance). This type of balance is still used, though less commonly than an electronic balance. See box for a description and the minimum weighable quantity (MWQ) calculation.

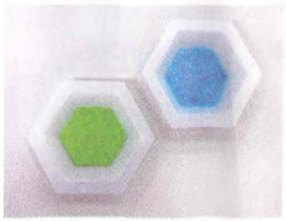
A top-loading electronic balance (called an analytical balance or scale) is used most commonly.

- This type of balance is simple to use and has higher sensitivity (i.e., can weigh with more precision, including very small amounts). It is not necessary to calculate the MWQ with an electronic balance.
- The compounder must place a weigh boat or glassine paper on the scale, then "tare" or "zero out" the balance. This ensures that only the ingredients are weighed and the container or paper used to hold the ingredients is not included in the weight.

With either balance, the material to be weighed (e.g., powder) should never be placed directly on the balance. Material should be placed on a weigh boat (a shallow dish made of plastic or other material) or on glassine weighing paper, which is coated to reduce moisture penetration.



Electronic balance
KuLouKu/Shutterstock.com



Weigh boats
Artur Wnorowski/Shutterstock.com

TORSION BALANCES

Class III (Class A) torsion balances have internal weights, which are used to weigh quantities ≤ 1 gram. When weighing > 1 gram, external weights (see picture) are placed on one pan and the substance to be weighed is placed on the other. The external weights must be handled with forceps (pincers) to avoid getting oil from the skin on the weights.

tonaquatic/stock.adobe.com

Torsion balances have a sensitivity requirement (SR) that is most often 6 mg, meaning 6 mg can be added or removed before the dial moves 1 division.

Torsion balance
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The minimum weighable quantity (MWQ), or the minimum amount that can be weighed, is calculated based on the SR and acceptable error rate (typically 0.05, or 5%):

MWQ = SR / acceptable error rate (0.05 or 5%)

Example: MWQ = 6 mg / 0.05 = 120 mg

MEASURING VOLUME

Pharmacists use various equipment to measure the volume of ingredients; nurses and patients use some of the same equipment to administer medication.

CYLINDRICAL AND CONICAL GRADUATES

Graduates, which are a type of equipment with lines on the glass that are used to measure volume, include graduated cylinders, conical (cone-shaped) graduates, beakers and graduated medication containers.

Conical graduate

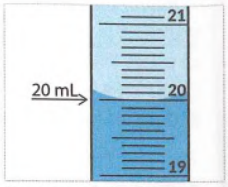
A graduated cylinder has the same diameter from the top to the bottom of the container and provides more accurate measurements than conical graduates or beakers, which have wide mouths (makes it easier to stir mixtures with a glass stirring rod). The wider the mouth, the lower the accuracy.

Graduated cylinder

ShannonChocolate/Shutterstock.com

Some important points about measuring volume using graduates include:

- Measuring volumes that are ≤ 20% of the graduate's capacity can cause a measuring error.
  - For example, measuring 5 mL in a 100 mL graduate has a higher risk of error than measuring 87 mL. A smaller graduate (≤ 25 mL) is required to measure 5 mL.
- To read the volume in a graduate, place it on a flat surface and view the height of the liquid in the cylinder at eye level.
- The liquid can curve downward from both sides, especially with viscous liquids. This curve is called the meniscus.
- The measurement is read at the bottom of the meniscus, at the center (see image).



Measure at the bottom of the meniscus, at eye level. This contains 20 mL.
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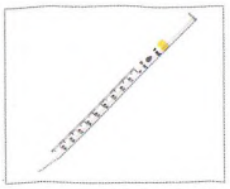
SYRINGES

Oral syringes and hypodermic (injection) syringes (also called parenteral syringes) can be used for measuring volume in nonsterile compounding.

- Syringes are most accurate for measuring small volumes, and are useful for measuring viscous (thick) liquids, such as glycerin and mineral oil.
- Oral syringes are useful for medications that are drawn up into patient-specific doses (i.e., unit dose) for administration into the mouth, through a feeding tube (e.g., nasogastric tube) or to deliver small amounts of topical preparations.
  - Safety measures must be in place to prevent oral medications from being given by the wrong route. Clearly label oral syringes by placing a "For Oral Use Only" sticker over the syringe cap.

PIPETTES AND DROPPERS

Pipettes are thin plastic or glass tubes used to measure small volumes and release liquid in drops (also called droppers).


Mohr pipette (graduated)
chromatos/Shutterstock.com

- A Mohr pipette is graduated and is used to measure different volumes.
- A volumetric pipette draws up a set volume only.

Disposable pipette
Paket/Shutterstock.com

GRINDING, MIXING AND TRANSFERRING EQUIPMENT

MORTARS AND PESTLES

Mortars and pestles are used to grind substances into a finer consistency, and a mortar can be used to stir and mix small amounts of ingredients. The mortar is the bowl, and the pestle is the blunt, heavy stick. A compounding pharmacy needs at least one glass and one Wedgwood or porcelain mortar and pestle.

- Glass mortars are used for liquids and for mixing compounds that are oily or can stain.
- Wedgwood mortars have a rough surface and are preferred for grinding dry crystals and hard powders.
- Porcelain mortars have a smooth surface and are preferred for blending powders and pulverizing gummy consistencies.

Types of Mortars and Pestles

Glass
aSculptor/ stock.adobe.com

Wedgwood
Sponner/ Shutterstock.com

Porcelain
akepong srichaichana/ Shutterstock.com

SPATULAS

Spatulas are used to mix and transfer ingredients from one place (e.g., ointment slab) to another place (e.g., container). The flat part of the blade can flatten and grind down ingredients, and pack preparations such as ointments into containers. Spatulas are made of stainless steel, plastic or hard rubber. Stainless steel and disposable plastic spatulas are used commonly.

MOLDS

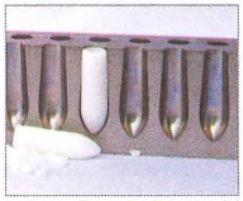
Reusable or disposable molds are used to prepare tablets, lozenges, troches and suppositories.

- Soft delivery vehicles (e.g., suppositories, lozenges) are often dispensed in disposable plastic molds to keep the product in the correct shape. Refrigeration also helps soft products retain shape.

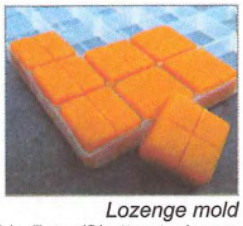
A tablet press (or tablet mold) is two plastic or metal plates used to compress damp powder into tablets.

TUBE SEALERS

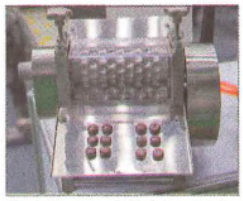
Tube sealers heat and squeeze the ends of tubes shut; the end will look similar to the crimped end of a toothpaste tube.



Suppository mold
Andri wahyudi/Shutterstock.com



Lozenge mold
Cuhle-Fotos/Shutterstock.com



Tablet press
Itsanan/Shutterstock.com

Tube sealer (sealed at bottom)
Katy Pack/Shutterstock.com

CAPSULES AND CAPSULE MACHINES

Capsules can be soft gels or hard shells, which are more commonly used for compounding. The shells are made of gelatin, an animal product which is pork-derived, or from hypromellose or a similar plant-derived product. A capsule-filling machine is a device that holds the capsule bodies upright, to allow for powder to be placed inside, then the caps are placed over the capsule bodies to close the capsules.

COMPOUNDING INGREDIENTS

All medications, whether compounded or not, include the drug or drugs (called the active pharmaceutical ingredient, or API) and the excipients. Excipients do not produce therapeutic effect, but are needed to make the dosage form stable, functional and, with some oral dosage forms, palatable.

INGREDIENT QUALITY

High-quality ingredients ensure the purity and safety of the compound. Ingredients should come from an FDA-registered facility and be listed in the USP National Formulary (USP-NF) and comply with its monograph standards.

MISSING EXPIRATION DATE

Ingredients degrade, and expiration dates are important to ensure that the product retains potency and is non-toxic. If there is an ingredient without an expiration date, the pharmacist will assign a conservative (cautious) date that is no more than 3 years from the date the pharmacy received the item.

COMMON EXCIPIENTS

SURFACTANTS

Surfactant is a contraction of the words surface active agent. Surfactants lower the surface tension between two ingredients (or phases) in a preparation to make them more miscible (i.e., easier to mix together).

For example, an oil and vinegar salad dressing has an oil phase that will become dispersed in the water phase (the vinegar) when shaken. The dressing will quickly settle back into the two distinct phases because the "tension" between the two surfaces is high and the oil and water will repel each other. A surfactant added to the salad dressing will lower the tension between the two surfaces, and prevent the phases from separating.

Surfactants are amphiphilic; they are both hydrophilic (on one side) and hydrophobic (on the other side). In the case of oil and water, the oil will interact with the lipophilic end of the surfactant, and the water will interact with the hydrophilic end of the surfactant.

TYPES OF SURFACTANTS

Surfactants have many uses in compounding. For example, adding a surfactant to a suspension leads to delivery of a more consistent dose by keeping the drug dispersed for longer. Surfactants can make it easier to grind particles and to mix ingredients. Surfactants are called by a variety of names, depending on use or type of preparation, as described below.

WETTING AGENTS/LEVIGATING AGENTS

Wetting agents, also called levigating agents, are substances that reduce the surface tension between a liquid and a solid. Levigation is a technique used to grind particles (i.e., make particles smaller) with a small amount of liquid (i.e., the wetting agent) in which the powder is insoluble. This creates a paste that can be incorporated into an ointment or suspension. Mineral oil is a common levigating agent for lipophilic (oil-soluble) compounds, and glycerin or propylene glycol are used for aqueous (water-soluble) compounds.

SUSPENDING AGENTS

A suspension is a solid dispersed in a liquid (e.g., amoxicillin powder does not dissolve in water, and is formulated as a suspension). Suspending agents are added to suspensions to prevent the solid particles from settling. Suspending agents do not keep suspensions separated for long; suspensions must be shaken to redisperse the solid prior to use. Suspending agents can also be called dispersants (or dispersing agents) or plasticizers; plasticizer means it will make the preparation easier to shape or mold. Sorbitol can be used as a plasticizer for gelatin capsules.

COMMERCIALLY AVAILABLE SUSPENDING AGENTS

Ora-Plus:

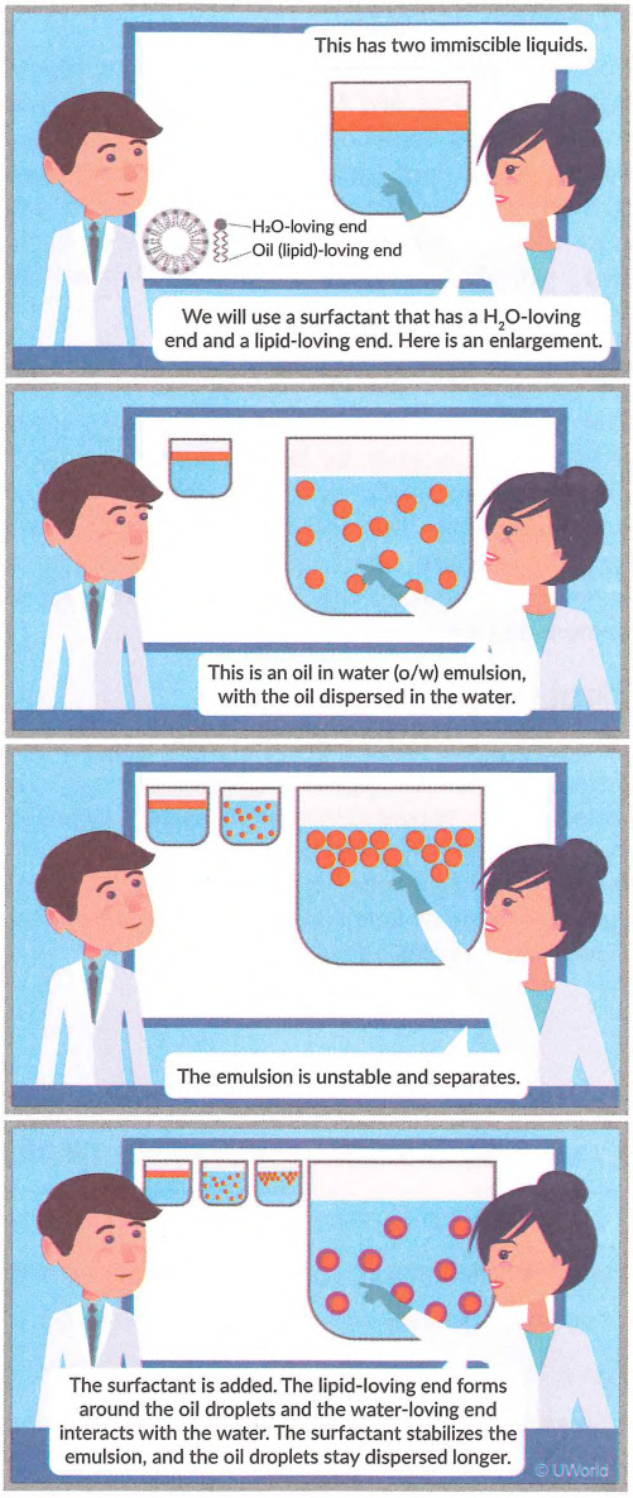
- Composed of a gel-like structure that keeps drug particles suspended and prevents settling
- Slightly acidic to ↓ drug degradation via oxidation
- Bland taste; combine with *Ora-Sweet* for flavor

Ora-Sweet:

- Similar to simple syrup
- Provides flavor to *Ora-Plus*

Ora-Blend is a commercially available combination of *Ora-Plus* and *Ora-Sweet*

Ora-Sweet and *Ora-Blend* are available in sugar-free formulations sweetened with saccharin *(Ora-Sweet SF, Ora-Blend SF)*



FOAMING AGENTS

Foaming agents are surfactants used to manufacture detergents, soaps and foam drug formulations. The foaming agent forms and stabilizes air bubbles. Topical foams (e.g., minoxidil) spread easily over a large surface area, leave minimal residue and enable quick drug absorption. Anti-foaming agents (e.g., simethicone) can also be used in nonsterile compounding.

GLYCOLS AND GELS

The commonly used products polyethylene glycol (PEG) and poloxamer, by itself or as the P in PLO gel (described later), are both delivery vehicles and surfactants. They have both hydrophilic and hydrophobic parts, which makes them useful for a variety of preparations. Glycols and gels are discussed in more detail in the following tables.

EMULSIFIERS

An emulsion is a mixture of two or more liquids which cannot be blended together (immiscible), such as water droplets dispersed in oil, or oil droplets dispersed in water. Emulsifiers are added to an emulsion to keep the liquid droplets dispersed throughout the liquid vehicle. This prevents the two liquids from separating. Emulsifiers can also be called emulgents.

The Hydrophilic-Lipophilic Balance

A primary consideration in selecting the surfactant is whether the emulsion is a water-in-oil (w/o) emulsion or an oil-in-water (o/w) emulsion.

- The taste of w/o formulations is not palatable; they are primarily used topically.
- Oral products are typically o/w formulations.

The hydrophilic-lipophilic balance (HLB) value determines the type of surfactant required to make an emulsion (see Study Tip Gal).

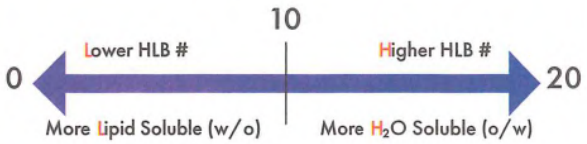
The following table has examples of surfactants and their HLB values. PEG 400 and *Tween 85* have HLB values > 10, and would be options for forming an o/w emulsion. The HLB values that are < 10 (e.g., *Span 65*) are options for forming a w/o emulsion.

THE HLB VALUE

The HLB scale range is 0 – 20.
The midpoint is 10.

Surfactants with a low HLB value (< 10) are more lipid-soluble and used in water-in-oil (w/o) emulsions.

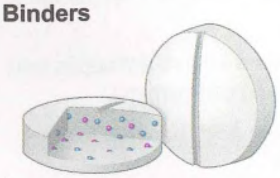
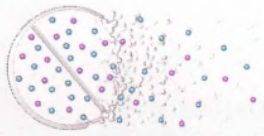
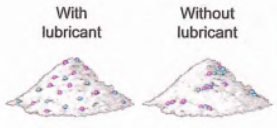
Surfactants with a high HLB value (> 10) are more water-soluble and used in oil-in-water (o/w) emulsions.

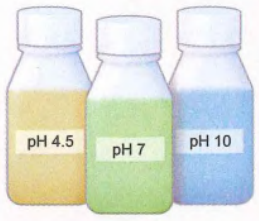


EXAMPLES OF SURFACTANTS AND THEIR HLB VALUES

COMMERCIAL NAME	CHEMICAL NAME	HLB VALUE
Glyceryl monostearate	Glyceryl monostearate	3.8
PEG 400 monooleate	Polyoxyethylene monooleate	11.4
Span 65	Sorbitan tristearate	2.1
Tween 81	Polyoxyethylene sorbitan monooleate	10
Tween 85	Polyoxyethylene sorbitan trioleate	11

OTHER EXCIPIENTS

EXCIPIENT	PURPOSE AND NOTES	SELECT EXAMPLES
Binders  ©UWorld	Binders allow the contents of a tablet to stick together while permitting the contents to be released once ingested. They provide stability and strength.	Acacia Starch paste Sucrose syrup Compressible sugar (e.g., *Nu-Tab)*
Diluents and fillers ©UWorld	Diluents (to make something more dilute) and fillers (to bulk up a small amount) add size to small dosages. In liquids, the diluent dissolves or suspends the drug and facilitates disintegration, which is required for absorption in the body (see disintegrants below).	**Tablet/capsules:** Sugars: Lactose Mannitol Sorbitol Starches Calcium salts Cellulose powder **Liquids:** Water Glycerin Alcohol **Topicals:** Petrolatum Mineral oil Lanolin
Disintegrants  ©UWorld	Disintegrants facilitate the breakup of a tablet after oral administration. Oral products have to be dissolved in order to be absorbed. Alginates and cellulose absorb water, causing the tablet to swell and release its contents.	Alginic acid Cellulose products Starches
Flavorings and coloring agents ©UWorld	Flavorings and coloring agents make the product look and taste better. Salty or sweet tastes mask a bitter flavor. Mint and spices mask poor flavor. Acids (such as citric acid) enhance fruit flavors.	**Sweeteners:** Non-caloric, artificial: Aspartame Saccharin Sucralose Glycerin Dextrose Sugar alcohols (e.g., mannitol, sorbitol, xylitol) Stevia **Coloring agents:** D&C Red No. 3 Yellow No. 6 Caramel Ferric oxide (red)
Lubricants  ©UWorld	Lubricants and anti-adherents prevent ingredients from sticking to each other and to equipment. This can be useful for tablet molds and punches, suppository molds and for capsule filling. Can be called glidants or anti-adherents. Glidants improve powder flowability by reducing interparticle friction.	Magnesium stearate, calcium stearate, stearic acid PEG Glycerin Mineral oil Talc

EXCIPIENT	PURPOSE AND NOTES	SELECT EXAMPLES
Preservatives ©UWorld	Preservatives slow or prevent microbial growth. They are required in most preparations except if sterile and used immediately or if packaged as single-use preparations. Ophthalmic preparations in multi-dose containers need a preservative. Do not use preservatives in neonates. Alcohols and acids are often used as preservatives. Preservative names commonly have "benz," "cetyl," "phenyl/ol" or "parabens."	Chlorhexidine [also used as an antiseptic in surgical scrubs to eliminate or reduce microorganisms *(Hibiclens)* and as a dental rinse *(Peridex)*] Povidone-iodine (used as a topical antiseptic and as a preservative in some ophthalmics) Sodium benzoate/benzoic acid, benzalkonium chloride, benzyl alcohol Sorbic acid/potassium sorbate Methyl/ethyl/propyl parabens EDTA Thimerosal (contains mercury, used in some vaccines) Cetylpyridinium chloride
Buffers  ©UWorld	Buffers keep the pH within a certain range, which can improve stability and solubility and decrease irritation to sensitive tissues in the body. Ionized compounds are more polar, which makes them more water-soluble. The pKa determines how much of a compound is ionized when placed into a solution with a set pH. The pH of a buffer system can be calculated with the Henderson-Hasselbalch equation (see the Calculations IV chapter).	**Buffers used to maintain acidic pH:** Hydrochloric acid Acetic acid/sodium acetate Citric acid/sodium citrate **Buffers used to maintain alkaline pH:** Sodium hydroxide Boric acid/sodium borate Sodium bicarbonate/sodium carbonate **Buffers used to maintain neutral pH:** Sodium biphosphate/sodium phosphate Potassium phosphate/metaphosphate
Adsorbents	Adsorbents keep powders dry and prevent hydrolysis reactions.	Magnesium oxide/carbonate, kaolin
Anti-foaming agents	Anti-foaming agents break up and inhibit the formation of foams.	Simethicone, dimethicone
Coatings (regular)	Coatings prevent degradation due to oxygen, light and moisture, and mask unpalatable taste. Enteric coatings prevent drug degradation in the stomach by stomach acid.	Shellac, gelatin, gluten (food grade) Cellulose acetate phthalate
Gelling (thickening) agents	Gelling agents increase the viscosity of a substance and can stabilize the mixture. Gelatin, cellulose and bentonite are used commonly; they swell when mixed with water.	Agar, alginates, various gums [guar, xanthan, acacia (a natural gum)], gelatins, bentonite (a type of clay), cellulose, starches, cetyl alcohol, magnesium aluminum silicate, poloxamer (pluronic) gels, polyvinyl alcohol (eye lubricant), sorbitol
Humectants	Prevent preparations from becoming dry and brittle. When put into emollients, humectants draw water into the skin to moisturize.	Glycerin or glycerol, propylene glycol, PEG, lecithin, hyaluronic acid

SOLVENTS

HYDROPHILIC SOLVENTS

SOLVENTS	PURPOSE AND NOTES	SELECT EXAMPLES
Water ggw/stock.adobe.com	Water is commonly used as a solvent, as a delivery vehicle and for cleaning equipment and tools. As a delivery vehicle, water is used for oral liquid formulations (e.g., solutions, suspensions, emulsions), topicals (e.g., creams, lotions) and injectable medications.	USP specifies that purified water must be used in compounding, unless otherwise specified. Purified water has been treated to remove chemicals and contaminants. Types of purification include distillation, deionization, reverse osmosis and carbon filtration. Distilled water is used for reconstitution [i.e., adding water to lyophilized (freeze-dried) powder] to prepare oral suspensions and in nonsterile compounding preparations. Potable water (drinking/tap water) is safe to drink and used for hand washing.
Sterile water Burlingham/Shutterstock.com	For preparation and reconstitution of sterile drugs.	Sterile water for injection (SWFI) must be free of bacterial endotoxins (pyrogens) produced by microorganisms that inhabit water. Bacteriostatic water for injection: SWFI with antimicrobial preservatives. Sterile water for irrigation: sterile water packaged in large containers for washing, rinsing and dilution of products used for irrigating body cavities, wounds, urinary catheters or surgical drainage tubes.
Alcohols Mohd Syis Zulkipli/ Shutterstock.com	Alcohols have high miscibility (mixes easily) with water and can be used to dissolve solutes that would be insoluble in water alone. Isopropyl alcohol (IPA) is used as a disinfectant on equipment or on skin (e.g., on an alcohol swab for skin disinfection prior to a needle stick). They can be used as solvents when compounding topicals.	Benzyl alcohol: used as a solvent, preservative and for the aroma (fragrance). Alcohol USP: ethanol (grain alcohol, ethyl alcohol or drinking alcohol). Sterile IPA 70%: preferred disinfectant for sterile compounding equipment.
Glycols	Glycols have a low freezing point, a high boiling point and are water-soluble. Polyethylene glycol (PEG) has low toxicity and low systemic absorption. It is used as a surfactant, solvent, plasticizer, suppository base, ointment base, humectant, lubricant and troche base. It is water-soluble and water-miscible. When PEG is linked to a protein drug (pegylated), such as PEG-filgrastim, it increases the half-life.	Polyethylene glycol (PEG): PEGs are numbered based on the molecular weight. PEG 400 is used commonly in compounding and PEG 3350 is used as a laxative. *Polybase* is a PEG mixture used as a suppository base. It is a good delivery vehicle and slides out of molds without the need for a lubricant. It is also a good emulsifier. Glycerin Propylene glycol: used in small quantities as a solvent (large quantities are toxic)

HYDROPHOBIC SOLVENTS

SOLVENTS	PURPOSE AND NOTES	SELECT EXAMPLES
Oils and Fats Oils are hydrocarbon liquids derived from plants, animals or petroleum [i.e., petrolatum *(Vaseline* petroleum jelly)]. Oils are immiscible in water; they are hydrophobic, lipophilic compounds.	Oils are used as delivery vehicles, for therapeutic or nutritional use, and some are used as scents or flavorings.	Mineral oil: derived from petroleum, and is the ingredient in baby oil Almond, borage, canola, castor, coconut Omega-3 (alpha-linolenic fatty acids, DHA/EPA) Omega-6 (gamma-linoleic fatty acids)

EMOLLIENTS (MOISTURIZERS)

An emollient refers to a product that softens and soothes the skin. Ointments are best for extremely dry skin and thick skin, such as on elbows and feet. Creams are used for normal and dry skin. Lotions have the most water, and are best for oily skin. Humectants are put into many emollient formulations to pull in water from the atmosphere to moisturize the skin. They can be sticky-feeling, and are combined with more soothing ingredients.

Occlusive ointments, including petroleum jelly (i.e., white petrolatum), theobroma oil (i.e., cocoa butter), beeswax, paraffin and other waxes form a protective barrier to prevent the loss of water molecules from the top layer of the skin (epidermis). USP separates ointments into four groups (see below). Some contain water and some do not, which is important in determining the BUD.

EMOLLIENT	PURPOSE AND NOTES	SELECT EXAMPLES
Ointments Defined as semisolids, with 0–20% water, hydrocarbons, waxes or polyols (compounds with multiple OH groups) Separated into four groups (see below)	Provide a barrier to water loss from the skin and are used as vehicles for topical drug delivery	Petrolatum, lanolin, mineral oil *Polybase* *Aquaphor* *Aquabase*
1. Hydrocarbon Bases	Called "oleaginous" ointments (i.e., oil-containing, no water); good for drug delivery and forming a protective barrier, hard to wash off, greasy	White ointment, white petrolatum (e.g., *Vaseline* petroleum jelly)
2. Absorption Bases	Can be used to form water-in-oil emulsions	Hydrophilic petrolatum, lanolin
3. Water-Removable Bases	Hydrophilic, oil-in-water emulsions. Per USP, more correctly called creams; more easily diluted, and easier to wash off the skin	Hydrophilic ointment
4. Water-Soluble Bases	Do not contain petrolatum; per USP, are more correctly called gels	Polyethylene glycol ointment

EMOLLIENT	PURPOSE AND NOTES	SELECT EXAMPLES
Creams 20-50% water (more than ointments)	Creams are semi-solid preparations that have a soft, spreadable consistency. Most creams are water-in-oil or oil-in-water emulsions. Water-in-oil creams feel more greasy.	*Lipoderm* cream *Eucerin* *Cetaphil*
Lotions Contain the most water (more water than creams) More fluid – lotions are sometimes poured from a container, which is not feasible with creams.	Lotions can be aqueous or hydroalcoholic, with a small amount of alcohol added to solubilize ingredients, or to hasten evaporation of the solvent from the skin	*Versabase* lotion
Gels Semisolid preparations of small inorganic particles or large organic molecules interpenetrated by a liquid.	Gels can be used to administer medications by various routes, including topical, oral, intranasal, vaginal and rectal. Gelling agents are added to increase the viscosity and thicken the product. Aqueous solutions of poloxamers are liquid when refrigerated and form a gel at room temperature. Poloxamer (Pluronic) Lecithin Organogel (PLO) gel is used often because of this property; compounds are easily mixed into the liquid (when taken from the refrigerator), which then forms a gel when stored at room temperature. This works well for transdermal drug delivery, especially for animals (e.g., application to a dog's ear).	Poloxamers contain a hydrophobic chain of polyoxypropylene with two hydrophilic chains of polyoxyethylene. This means poloxamer gel can be used for hydrophobic or hydrophilic drug delivery.
Pastes	Pastes contain powder in an ointment base	Zinc oxide paste, used for diaper rash; zinc oxide is a desiccant (draws water from the baby's bottom).
Suppository bases Made of various fats and glycols	Suppository bases have to stay intact for insertion and melt once inserted. Cocoa butter was a common base for suppositories, but it melts easily. Newer bases are more popular.	*Polybase*, cocoa butter (theobroma oil), hydrogenated vegetable oils (palm, palm kernel, and coconut oils), PEG polymers, glycerinated gelatin

EXCIPIENTS TO AVOID IN SELECT PATIENTS

EXCIPIENT	AVOID IN	ALTERNATIVE
Alcohol Used as a solvent	Children; can cause hypoglycemia, acidosis, CNS depression	Select an alternative solvent; see excipient table
Aspartame (contains **phenylalanine)** Used as a sweetener	Phenylketonuria (PKU); these patients cannot to metabolize phenylalanine	Select an alternative sweetener; see excipient table
Gelatin Made from animal (e.g., cows, pigs) collagen and used in capsule shells	Vegetarians, vegans or a patient who wants to avoid animal products	Hypromellose capsule shells; made from cellulose and are vegetarian and vegan (no meat or dairy)
Gluten Used as a starch (filler). Gluten is in wheat, barley and rye.	Celiac disease or a patient who wants to avoid gluten	Starch from non-gluten sources (e.g., corn, potato, tapioca)
Lactose Used as a sweetener, to compress tablets and as a filler/diluent	Lactose intolerance or allergy	Select an alternative depending on the purpose; see excipient table
Preservatives	Neonates	Use preservative-free formulations
Sugar alcohols (e.g., mannitol, sorbitol, xylitol) Used as a sweetener	Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS); can cause GI distress	Select an alternative sweetener; see excipient table
Sucrose (table sugar) Used as a sweetener and coating	Diabetes; depending on amount used, can increase blood glucose	Select an alternative sweetener; see excipient table
Xylitol Used as a sweetener	Dogs; can cause xylitol toxicosis (hypoglycemia and hepatotoxicity)	Select an alternative sweetener; see excipient table

NONSTERILE COMPOUNDING PREPARATION

Before compounding, the pharmacist evaluates the prescription to determine if it is appropriate for the patient, and whether the proposed formulation is reasonable (e.g., acceptable stability and palatability).

When ready to compound, the initial steps are similar for most formulations, such as calibrating equipment and weighing ingredients. The final steps are similar, including packaging and performing quality control (QC). The steps in between change depending on the formulation being prepared.

Safety Data Sheets (SDS) for each bulk ingredient provide safety procedures, including the recommended personal protective equipment (PPE).

INITIAL STEPS

1. Calculate the quantity needed for each component.
2. Gather all ingredients, containers and equipment.
3. Wash equipment, if needed, and calibrate.
4. Perform hand hygiene and garb.

COMPOUNDING STEPS

Make the product according to the master formulation record (see section at end of chapter).

- Most formulations require common techniques, such as trituration, levigation and geometric dilution (discussed below).
- Other steps are unique to the formulation, such as calculating the density factor to make suppositories.

COMPLETION STEPS

1. Document all compounding steps, ingredients and other details in the compounding record (see section at end of chapter).
2. Package the product and apply the container label and needed auxiliary labels.
3. Perform QC: validate the weight, check the product for mixing adequacy, color, clarity, odor, consistency and pH. Enter the measurements and observations in the compounding record.
4. Counsel the patient. If an adverse drug reaction (ADR) is reported, it should be recorded according to the facility's standard operating procedures.

PREPARING POWDERS

Powders are fine, solid particles. A dose of medication can be given as a dry powder (put into liquid or small amount of soft food) for someone who is not able to swallow capsules or tablets (e.g., a child), or powders can be used to prepare tablets, capsules, inhalations, suspensions, ointments, creams and other topicals. Powders often include excipients, such as:

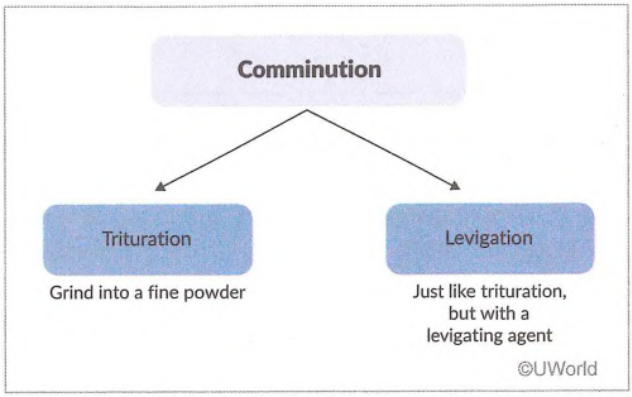
- Glidant/lubricant to improve the flowability of a powder (e.g., magnesium stearate)
- Surfactant to neutralize static charge and prevent powder from dispersing (e.g., sodium lauryl sulfate)

REDUCING PARTICLE SIZE

When making a compound with dry ingredients, the goal is to make an evenly-distributed mixture with fine powder. The compounder usually starts with coarse granules or tablets that need to be finely ground into smaller particles (0.1 – 10 microns). This can be accomplished with comminution, which means to reduce particle size by grinding, crushing, milling, vibrating or other process (manual or mechanical).

After the powder has been ground, it is placed into a sieve (sifter) and stirred with a sieve brush or plastic spatula to force the particles through the mesh. This separates larger particles from finely ground particles to ensure that the particle size is uniform. A high mesh size has many wires that make many holes; only a fine powder will get through the mesh. The sieve number is based on the number of holes per inch (e.g., #100 sieve has 100 openings/inch).

THREE MAIN METHODS OF COMMINUTION



- Trituration: a general term that means "mix thoroughly" (or make the product homogenous). Pharmacists most commonly associate trituration with grinding tablets with a mortar and pestle until a fine powder is achieved, but the term can describe liquids (e.g., triturating an emulsion by shaking it).
- Levigation and spatulation:
  - Levigation involves triturating the powder with a mortar and pestle and incorporating a small amount of liquid (a levigating agent or wetting agent) to help with the grinding process and create a uniform paste.
  - Spatulation is similar to levigation, but performed on an ointment slab with a spatula (not with a mortar and pestle).
- Pulverization by intervention is used for crystalline powders that will not crush easily. The crystals are dissolved with an intervening solvent and mixed until the solvent evaporates. When the powder recrystallizes, the particles are finer.

MIXING INGREDIENTS

GEOMETRIC DILUTION

Geometric dilution is a method of mixing ingredients to ensure that ingredients are evenly distributed in a diluent or delivery vehicle. A small amount of the drug is mixed into an equal amount of the diluent. After the initial small amount is thoroughly mixed, another equal amount of the ingredients is mixed in. This is repeated until all the ingredients are mixed together. Geometric dilution can be used with dry powder ingredients alone, or when making a paste. When using multiple ingredients, begin with the ingredient that has the smallest quantity, followed by the ingredient with the next smallest quantity, and up until each is added.

MELTING POINT ORDER

Heat is sometimes used when compounding to facilitate mixing. If melting ingredients, melt the ingredient with the highest melting point before adding ingredients with lower melting points (i.e., line up the ingredients from highest to lowest melting temperature and melt in that order). This avoids exposing substances with low melting points to higher temperatures than needed.

EUTECTIC MIXTURES

A eutectic mixture means that the combination of the ingredients melts at a lower temperature than either of the individual component's melting temperature.

Eutectic mixtures create difficulty during compounding.

- If a pharmacist is not aware that the components form a eutectic mixture, the temperature on the hot plate can be set too high and the mixture can burn.
- If the components are powders at room temperature, the mixture of the powders can melt and become sticky, ruining the dry preparation. An adsorbent can be used to keep the powder dry.

DOSAGE FORMS

SOLUTIONS, SUSPENSIONS AND EMULSIONS

A **SOLUTION** is a solute dissolved in a solvent (such as sodium chloride dissolved in water).

Solutions are homogenous (i.e., consistent, uniform throughout). If the solute concentration is too high, it can lead to unwanted precipitation (see below).

Solutions are usually for oral use. Lotions are topical solutions.

TYPES OF SOLUTIONS:

- Syrups are oral solutions with sucrose, other sugars or artificial sugars.
- Elixirs are sweet hydroalcoholic solutions used for drugs that would be insoluble in a purely aqueous formulation. Hydroalcohol is a mixture of alcohol and water.
- Tinctures are alcoholic or hydroalcoholic solutions made from plant or chemical substances.
- Spirits are alcohols or hydroalcohols of volatile, aromatic compounds such as camphor. Volatile means the compound vaporizes (evaporates) easily.

A **SUSPENSION** is a solid dispersed in a liquid. It is a two-phase heterogeneous (i.e., not uniform) mixture.

A wetting agent/levigating agent is a type of surfactant used to incorporate an insoluble drug into a liquid, which makes a suspension.

An **EMULSION** is a liquid dispersed in a liquid. It is a two-phase heterogeneous mixture. Emulsions are oil-in-water (oil droplets in an aqueous vehicle) or water-in-oil.*

An emulsifier is a type of surfactant that is used to reduce the surface tension between two liquids and prevent them from separating.

**The phase that is present as droplets is the dispersed, internal phase or discontinuous phase, and the phase in which the droplets are suspended is the continuous or external phase.*

PRECIPITATION/SEDIMENTATION is when the dispersed phase settles (clumps) together. The process of a solid settling on the bottom of a container is sedimentation.

This can happen with suspensions and emulsions, and less commonly with solutions. Shake or gently roll to redisperse.

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HOW TO PREPARE SOLUTIONS

Gather ingredients. Reduce the particle size of the solid drug to a fine powder. Dissolve the solute in the solvent. The dissolution rate can be used to determine the time it will take for the solute to dissolve (calculated using Fick's First Law of Diffusion). A larger surface area (i.e., smaller particles), stirring the preparation and using heat can increase the dissolution rate.

Add required excipients (e.g., a buffer to resist changes in pH, a preservative to protect against bacterial growth, flavorings, sweeteners, coloring agents). Package the solution and apply a BUD and appropriate auxiliary labels.

HOW TO PREPARE SUSPENSIONS

Gather ingredients. Reduce the particle size of the solid drug to a fine powder. Wet the powder, and levigate to form a paste. Continue to add liquid in portions. Add a surfactant to keep the suspension dispersed. Transfer the mixture into a conical graduate or the container in which it will be dispensed and add a quantity of water sufficient to make (QS) the final volume.

Add required excipients (e.g., a preservative to protect against bacterial growth, flavorings, sweeteners, coloring agents). Package the suspension and apply a BUD. Will need to be redispersed (i.e., shaken) prior to use.

HOW TO PREPARE EMULSIONS

Emulsions are made by the Continental or English method, mixing oil, water, and an emulsifier (gum) in a 4:2:1 ratio.

Continental (dry gum) method:

1. Levigate the gum with oil.
2. Add the water all at once.
3. Triturate by shaking in a bottle or mixing in a mortar until a cracking sound is heard and mixture is creamy white.
4. Add other ingredients by dissolving them first in solution and QS with water up to the final volume.
5. Homogenize (with a homogenizer machine).

English (wet gum) method:

1. Triturate the gum with water to form a mucilage (thick and sticky like mucus).
2. Add oil slowly while shaking or mixing.
3. Add other ingredients as in the dry gum method.

Hint: *It rains a lot in England (wet), and the oil is added slowly because you cannot drive too fast in the rain. The continent is dry, and you can add the water quickly (all at once)*

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TABLETS

There are many types of tablets, including molded tablets, sublingual tablets, buccal tablets, orally disintegrating tablets, chewable tablets, effervescent tablets and compressed tablets. The molded tablet is the most common tablet type made in compounding, and the compressed tablet is the most common type made in manufacturing.

Tablets contain the active drug and excipients, including diluents, binders, disintegrants, lubricants, coloring agents and flavoring agents.

HOW TO PREPARE MOLDED TABLETS

Triturate the dry ingredients and mix by geometric dilution. Add alcohol and/or water to moisten the powder. The powder mixture should have a pasty consistency, which can be molded into tablets (using tablet molds), and allowed to dry. Coloring and a coating may be added.

CAPSULES

Capsules are soluble shells of gelatin (an animal product) or hypromellose (a vegetable product), which are filled with the active drug, diluents and other excipients. Hard-shell capsules are used most commonly in compounding, and are filled with powders. Soft-shell capsules are used mostly for oils. Glycerol and sorbitol are used as plasticizers to make the capsules less brittle and more flexible.

HOW TO PREPARE CAPSULES

Triturate the dry ingredients and geometrically mix with the fillers/other excipients. The powder is put into the capsules by either hand filling (also known as the "punch method") or by using a capsule-filling machine.

Hand filling: the powder is placed on powder paper or an ointment slab. The pile of powder is smoothed with a spatula to a height about a third of the length of the capsule. The open end of the capsule is repeatedly "punched" into the pile of powder until the capsule is filled. When the base is filled, it is fitted with the cap.

Manual capsule-filling machine: these are small devices that help the pharmacist quickly load 50, 100 or 300 capsules. Plates help sort the capsule bodies and hold them upright and in place. The powder is put above the capsules on to a plastic sheet where a plastic spreader is used to move the powder into the capsules. A comb or tamper and a spreader are used repeatedly until the powder is packed into the capsules. Then, the caps are put over the capsule bodies.

If filling capsules with liquid instead of powder, the liquids are added to upright capsule bodies with a pipette or dropper.

Capsule-filling machine
felipe caparros/Shutterstock.com

LOZENGES/TROCHES

Lozenges (or troches) can be hard or soft tablets that slowly dissolve in the mouth. Lozenges/troches are generally used to deliver a medication that acts locally in the mouth. A commercially available example is a clotrimazole troche for treatment of oral thrush.

A lozenge contains the active drug in a base of:

- Sucrose or syrup for hard lozenges
- Polyethylene glycol (PEG) for soft lozenges

Flavoring agents and coloring agents may be added. The base is melted, mixed with the API and excipients, placed into a mold and allowed to cool back into a solid.

TOPICAL FORMULATIONS

Creams, lotions, ointments, pastes and gels are delivery vehicles (see Emollients section). Lotions contain a lot of water, so they can be delivered in pumps. Creams and ointments are packaged in tubes and tubs.

HOW TO PREPARE OINTMENTS

Powders should be triturated well, using a levigating agent. The levigating agent must be miscible with the base. The powder is mixed into the ointment base, using geometric dilution.

Certain ointments require heat to mix the components together well. This is called the fusion method. Always use the lowest temperature possible to prevent undesired chemical reactions (see previous section on Melting Point Order). A water bath to heat the ointment components can prevent over-heating.

SUPPOSITORIES

A suppository base is either oil-soluble (oleaginous) or water-soluble. Oil-soluble bases include cocoa butter and hydrogenated vegetable oils (palm, palm kernel and coconut oils). Water-soluble bases include PEG polymers and glycerinated gelatin.

- If a drug powder is added to a base, the powder should be triturated to a fine consistency.
- If the preparation softens or melts easily, such as with cocoa butter, the molds can be stored in the refrigerator to make the suppository hard and easier to insert.

HOW TO PREPARE SUPPOSITORIES

There are three methods to prepare a suppository:

- Hand molding can be used when only a few suppositories are being prepared. When using a cocoa butter base, the cocoa butter is grated and then mixed with the drug in a mortar and pestle or on a pill tile with a spatula. The mass is rolled into a cylinder then cut into pieces. A tip is formed on one end to make insertion easier.
- In the commonly-used fusion molding method, the base is gently heated, the ingredients are added, the mixture is poured into room temperature molds, and left to harden. If the base is poured into a cold mold, the suppository can crack and split. If the suppository does not harden, the molds can be refrigerated. Often, the suppositories are dispensed in the mold to prevent damage.
- In the compression molding method, the pharmacist needs to know the weight of each mold, and the drug's density factor. The amount of base required to fill each mold is calculated, the base is grated, mixed with the drug and put into a cold compression mold.

Lubricants can be applied to the mold so the suppositories can be removed more easily, but it must be opposite of the suppository base in terms of solubility to reduce friction. For example: glycerin or propylene glycol (water-soluble) are good lubricants for molds containing suppositories made with oil-soluble bases, while mineral oil or vegetable oil spray (oil-soluble) are good lubricants for molds containing suppositories made with water-soluble bases.

STABILITY AND DEGRADATION

USP defines stability as the extent to which a product retains, within specified limits, and throughout its period of storage and use (i.e., the shelf-life), the same properties and characteristics it possessed at the time it was made. The stability of compounded products can be compromised if they are not prepared or stored properly. This can be recognized by changes in texture, color or odor or precipitation. Drug degradation and incompatibility are discussed in more detail in the Basic Science Concepts and Intravenous Medication Principles chapters.

SELECTING THE BEYOND-USE DATE FOR NONSTERILE PREPARATIONS

The beyond-use date (BUD) is the date or time after which the compounded product must not be used. The BUD is based on how susceptible the compounded nonsterile preparation is to microbial contamination and degradation. This is determined by the formulation of the product and the water activity *(Aw)*, which can be thought of as the available water to support microbial growth and hydrolysis. An aqueous preparation (e.g., gel, cream, solution) has an $Aw \geq 0.60$. These have a higher risk of contamination/degradation and are assigned a shorter BUD. Nonaqueous preparations (e.g., tablet, suppository, ointment) have an $Aw < 0.60$, and a lower risk of contamination/degradation, with a longer BUD.

The Study Tip Gal provides the default BUDs for CNSPs that are packaged per USP 795 standards.

BEYOND-USE DATES FOR NONSTERILE COMPOUNDED PRODUCTS

FORMULATION	BEYOND-USE DATE
Aqueous dosage forms ($Aw \geq 0.6$)	
Nonpreserved aqueous dosage form	14 days Store in refrigerator
Preserved aqueous dosage form	35 days
Nonaqeuous dosage forms ($Aw < 0.6$)	
Oral liquid	90 days
Other nonaqueous dosage form	180 days

PREPARATION	FORMULATION	MAXIMUM BUD
Cream (oil in water emulsion, petrolatum free), with preservative *(Aw* 0.968)	Preserved aqueous	35 days
Oral suspension (water-based), without preservative *(Aw* 0.992)	Nonpreserved aqueous	14 days, refrigerated
Ointment (in petrolatum) *(Aw* 0.396)	Nonaqueous (other)	180 days
Foam, without preservative *(Aw* 0.983)	Nonpreserved aqueous	14 days, refrigerated
Lip balm *(Aw* 0.181)	Nonaqueous (other)	180 days
Gelatin-based lozenge *(Aw* 0.332)	Nonaqueous (other)	180 days
Suppository (in an oleaginous base) *(Aw* 0.385)	Nonaqueous (other)	180 days
Powder for inhalation *(Aw* 0.402)	Nonaqueous (other)	180 days
Nasal spray, with preservative *(Aw* 0.991)	Preserved aqueous	35 days

BEYOND-USE DATE EXCEPTIONS

Individual products may have shorter stability and/or different storage requirements which will override USP-provided defaults. Specific exceptions include:

- If any ingredient expires before the BUD, use the earlier expiration date.
- BUDs can be extended to a maximum of 180 days if stability data is obtained that determines the drug is stable for a longer period.

UNIT-DOSE REPACKAGING

A unit-dose refers to a package that contains one dose of a medication. Unit-dose preparations can come from the manufacturer or a repackaging company, or a pharmacy can repackage multi-dose containers into unit-dose packages.

Unit-dose repackaging is not compounding, but shares some commonalities, including the assignment of a BUD. BUDs for repackaged drugs should be the manufacturer's expiration date from the original container or 6 months from the repackaging date, whichever is earlier.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

A quality assurance (QA) program outlines steps and actions to ensure proper standards are maintained. It is included in the standard operating procedures (SOPs), which are itemized steps on how to perform routine and expected tasks. The QA program must be reviewed at least once every 12 months by the designated person.

The QA program should include periodic testing (i.e., quality control) of finished compounded preparations. A pharmacy may do some QA testing in-house (e.g., confirming weight and consistency) and outsource others (e.g., send products to a company for sterility or stability testing).

QA records need to include the names of the compounding staff, including their job orientation and training records.

EVALUATION AND LABELING

Before a compound is dispensed to a patient, there must be a visual inspection (with documentation) to make sure the CNSP looks as intended.

Every CNSP must be labeled clearly with an internal identification number, the active ingredients (and amounts), the BUD and storage information, the dosage form and the total volume. Certain formulations may need additional auxiliary labels, such as "shake well," "refrigerate" or "for external use only."

PATIENT COUNSELING

Counseling for the patient or caregiver about the proper use of a compounded product should be provided, as is required for any prescription drug. ADRs resulting from a compounded product should be reported to the pharmacy and documented per the facility's SOPs. Depending on the reaction, further action may be necessary (e.g., reporting serious events and suspect drugs to the FDA).

DOCUMENTATION

Two records that each compounded product must have are the master formulation record and the compounding record. The master formulation record (or master formula) is the recipe that is followed to compound a preparation. The compounding record (or log) is the log book of all products made at the pharmacy (see examples on the following pages).

The compounding record must be detailed enough that another trained person can replicate the steps involved in the preparation, evaluate if the procedure was correct and trace the origin of all components.

Master Formulation Record #3755
IBUPROFEN 200 mg SUPPOSITORIES

Formula:			
Ibuprofen 200 mg Suppositories			
Strength:	200 mg	**Quantity:**	10
Equipment:	Balance, mortar and pestle, strainer, hot plate, molds, spatula		

Ingredients:	**Quantity:**
Ibuprofen powder USP	0.2 gm
SilicaGel	0.02 gm
Base MBK (Fatty Acid Base)	Calculate

Procedure:

Note: calculations should be made to make an excess amount of 10% of the amount needed.

1. Calculate and weigh ingredients to prepare 10 ibuprofen 200 mg suppositories in the blue mold which is calibrated to 1.28 gm of *Base MBK* per suppository. Use the Suppository, General Formula worksheet.
2. Melt *Base MBK* at 50 degrees C using a hot water bath.
3. Using a mortar and pestle, triturate ibuprofen and *SilicaGel* together to a fine powder.
4. Sift the powder from Step 3 into the melted *Base MBK* while stirring. The use of a strainer helps to ensure small particle size.
5. Turn off heat and stir until mixture looks consistently suspended.
6. Pour into molds (may use a large bore syringe if available) and allow to cool to room temperature.
7. Package in universal sleeve and label.

Recommended Beyond-Use Date:	180 days (per USP-NF)
Recommended Storage/ Auxiliary Labels:	Refrigerate
Quality control and physical description:	White, smooth suppositories

Notes:

MASTER FORMULATION RECORD

- Compound's official or assigned name
- Strength or activity
- Dosage form
- Ingredients, with amounts
- Calculations, if appropriate
- Instructions for preparation (including a description of compounding steps, equipment and supplies)
- Recommended BUD (with reference source)
- Storage requirements
- Physical description of the final product
- Container closure system
- Labeling requirements
- Quality control procedures and expected results

What you SHOULD do

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Formula # 3755

Raindrop Compounding Pharmacy
COMPOUNDING RECORD

PRODUCT

Drug Name and Strength	Use/Dosage Form	Quantity	Control/Rx #	Date
Ibuprofen 200 mg	Suppositories	#10	37-865	4-10-24

INGREDIENTS

Ingredient	NDC or Manufacturer #	QTY	LOT	EXP
Ibuprofen powder USP	IB100-25, Spectrum	2 g	A3472-19	3/27
Silica gel	S1935, Spectrum	0.2 g	S1008-19	12/26
MBK base	30-156, PCCA	12.8 g	1234 -18	2/26
Disposable supp molds	Apothecary			

COMPOUNDING DETAILS

Calculations:	Ibuprofen 0.2 g x 10 = 2 g, Silica 0.02 g x 10 = 0.2 g, MBK base 1.28 g x 10 = 12.8 g
QC Weight:	1.5 g, smooth uniform surface, even color
Description:	1.5 g white suppositories
Beyond-Use Date:	9/10/24
Storage:	refrigerate

Weighed by: Dacy L

Prepared by: Dacy L

COMPOUNDING RECORD

Compound's official or assigned name

Strength or activity

Dosage form

Date of preparation (and time, if needed)

Internal identification number

Ingredients (including manufacturers/sources, lot numbers and expiration dates) and quantities

Staff involved in compounding

Total quantity compounded

Assigned BUD and storage requirements

Calculations

Physical description of final product

Results of quality control procedures

What you DID

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CHAPTER 16

STERILE COMPOUNDING

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= Study Tip Gal

STERILE COMPOUNDING

Drugs administered into a body site that is not typically exposed to the outside environment (e.g., blood, bladder cavity, lungs) or is highly susceptible to infection (e.g., eyes) must be prepared using sterile technique. This ensures that the compound will be free of microorganisms (e.g., bacteria, viruses, fungi) and contaminants (e.g., glass shards, precipitates, particles).

Sterile compounding includes combining, admixing, reconstituting, diluting or repackaging/altering a drug or bulk substance in order to create a sterile preparation.

Sterile compounding is used to prepare:

- Injections, including intravenous (IV), intramuscular (IM), subcutaneous (SC, SQ) and intrathecal drugs
- Eye drops
- Irrigations (liquid "washes" of a body cavity)
- Pulmonary inhalations (does not include nasal inhalations)
- Baths and soaks for live tissues/organs
- Implants

Minimum acceptable standards for sterile compounding are set by the U.S. Pharmacopeia (USP) in chapter 797. These standards apply to any person who prepares sterile compounds in any setting, for humans or animals. To adequately prepare for the chapter discussion, review the acronyms and terminology used by USP, which are provided in the Study Tip Gal below.

INTERPRETING USP TERMINOLOGY

ACRONYM	MEANING	COMMON TERMS
CSP	Compounded sterile product	IV or other drug that requires sterile manipulation
SVP	Small volume parenteral	IV bag or container with a volume ≤ 100 mL
LVP	Large volume parenteral	IV bag or container with a volume > 100 mL
PPE	Personal protective equipment	Garb (e.g., gown, gloves, mask); "don" means to put on, "doff" is to take off
PEC	Primary engineering control	Sterile hood that provides ISO 5 air for sterile compounding
LAFW	Laminar airflow workbench	A type of open-front sterile hood (PEC); air flows in one direction (i.e., unidirectional)
SEC	Secondary engineering control	The room containing ISO 7 air where the sterile hood (PEC) is located; also called the buffer room
SCA	Segregated compounding area	Designated space that contains an ISO 5 sterile hood (PEC) but is not part of a cleanroom suite; air in the designated space (i.e., room air) is not ISO-rated
CAI	Compounding aseptic isolator	A type of closed-front ISO 5 sterile hood (PEC) used for nonhazardous drug compounding; also known as a "glovebox"
RABS	Restricted access barrier system	Any closed-front ISO 5 sterile hood (includes CAIs); also known as a "glovebox"

SPACE REQUIREMENTS

There are greater (and stricter) compounding space requirements for sterile compounding than nonsterile compounding. This chapter focuses on requirements for nonhazardous sterile compounding; the Compounding with Hazardous Drugs chapter focuses on both nonsterile and sterile hazardous drug compounding.

PHYSICAL SPACE BASICS

Surfaces of ceilings, walls, floors, fixtures, shelving, counters and cabinets must be smooth, impervious and free from cracks and crevices to make them easy to clean and disinfect. Stainless steel equipment is often used. Objects that shed particles (e.g., cardboard boxes) should not be brought into the sterile compounding space.

AIR QUALITY

ISO RATINGS

Clean air in the compounding area reduces the risk of contamination. The International Standards Organization (ISO) sets the standards for air quality, which is determined by the number and size of particles per volume of air (see table below). The lower the particle count, the cleaner the air. Ambient (room) air is not rated; if it were, most room air would be about ISO 9.

In critical areas that are closest to exposed sterile drugs and containers [i.e., inside the sterile hood (PEC)], the air quality must be at least ISO 5. This means that there are no more than 3,520 particles per cubic meter of air. Particles are included in this count if they are 0.5 microns (micrometers) or larger.

The farther away from the PEC, the dirtier the air. The buffer area (the SEC, which contains PECs) must be at least ISO 7. The anteroom (the room adjacent to the SEC where hand washing and garbing occurs) must be at least ISO 8 if it opens into a positive-pressure buffer area (i.e., used for nonhazardous sterile compounding).

COMPOUNDING AREA	ISO RATING	PARTICLES/M^3
Primary engineering control (PEC, called the hood, isolator or "glovebox")	5	3,520
Not applicable (ISO 6 is not used for pharmacy spaces)	6	35,200
Secondary engineering control (SEC, called the buffer room or buffer area)	7	352,000
Anteroom	7 or 8*	3,520,000

**ISO 8 is acceptable if the anteroom opens into a positive-pressure buffer room (e.g., nonhazardous sterile cleanroom), but cleaner ISO 7 air can be used; ISO 7 is required for an anteroom that opens into a negative-pressure buffer room (e.g., hazardous drug cleanroom).*

AIR CHANGES

Air in spaces used for compounding can be contaminated and needs to be regularly replaced. The air changes per hour (ACPH) is the number of times (per hour) that the air is replaced in the room. For a room with ISO 7 air (e.g., the SEC), there must be at least 30 ACPH. For a room with ISO 8 air, there must be at least 20 ACPH.

AIR PRESSURE

The air pressure in a space relative to the adjacent space is important. The air pressure inside the PEC and SEC are both positive for nonhazardous drug compounding. Positive air pressure protects the compounded sterile products (CSPs) from contamination.

TYPES OF STERILE COMPOUNDING AREAS

- Cleanroom suite: one or more sterile hoods (ISO 5 PECs) inside an ISO 7 buffer room (SEC) that is entered through an adjacent anteroom.
- Segregated compounding area (SCA) with an ISO 5 PEC, often an isolator ("glovebox") with a closed front, located in a segregated space with unclassified air.

PRIMARY ENGINEERING CONTROL

In most pharmacies, the way to achieve ISO 5 air for sterile compounding is by using a sterile hood (PEC). In other industries and larger hospital pharmacies, whole rooms may have ISO 5 air.

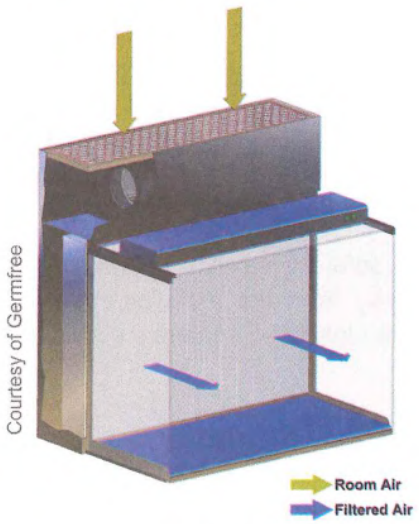
HIGH-EFFICIENCY PARTICULATE AIR FILTERS

High-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters remove particles when air runs through the filter. HEPA filters are > 99.97% efficient in removing particles as small as 0.3 microns, including bacteria, viruses, fungi and dust.

Inside a PEC, a HEPA filter provides the clean ISO 5 air for compounding. The space in front of the HEPA filter is called the direct compounding area (DCA). The air coming directly out of the HEPA filter is called the first air (see the Study Tip Gal on the next page). The HEPA filter must be recertified by a specialist every 6 months and anytime a PEC has been moved.

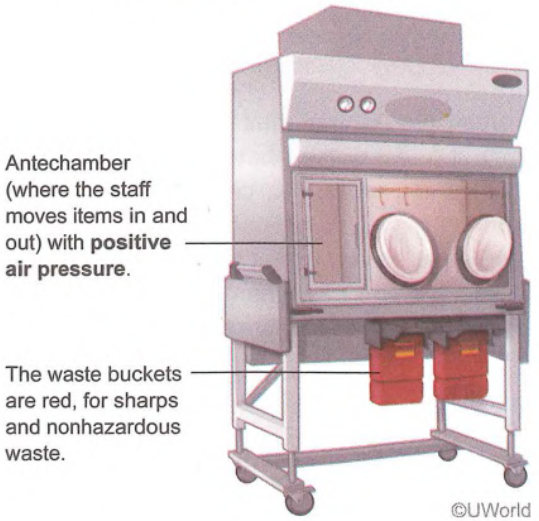
TYPES OF PECS

- A laminar airflow workbench (LAFW) is an open-front PEC where air flows in unidirectional lines from the HEPA filter, typically from the back of the hood, known as horizontal laminar airflow (see image). Positive-pressure laminar airflow keeps the cleaner air in the PEC from mixing with the dirtier air in the buffer room and keeps particles from colliding with each other and landing on the DCA surface or CSPs.
- A compounding aseptic isolator (CAI) is a closed-front PEC that can be located in a buffer room (SEC), but is often located in a segregated compounding area (SCA). The closed front keeps the unclassified room air around it from mixing with the clean ISO 5 air inside the PEC. It is commonly referred to as a "glovebox" because the pharmacist or technician inserts their hands through the ports on the front into gloves that reside within the PEC.



Horizontal laminar airflow

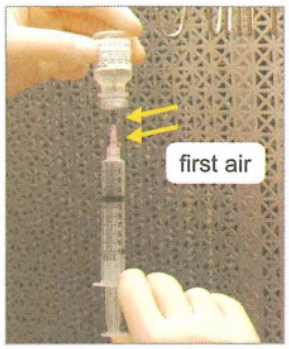
COMPOUNDING ASEPTIC ISOLATOR



AIR QUALITY INSIDE THE PEC

The Direct Compounding Area and First Air

The PEC provides ISO 5 air quality for sterile compounding. The air coming directly out of the HEPA filter is called the first air, which is cleaner than the rest of the air in the sterile hood. To prevent contamination of CSPs during compounding, the injection port of the container and the syringe needle must be kept in the first air (see image).



Richard Fincher/Shutterstock.com

- Do not obstruct first air, especially the area where the needle enters the vial or ampule.
- Do not block airflow from the HEPA filter with hands or supplies.
- Place items correctly inside the PEC to avoid creating turbulence, which can lead to contamination of the CSPs.

Most contamination of CSPs comes from the compounding staff, largely from inadequate hand hygiene and garbing. Correct technique is essential; see Workflow for CSP Preparation later in this chapter.

SECONDARY ENGINEERING CONTROL

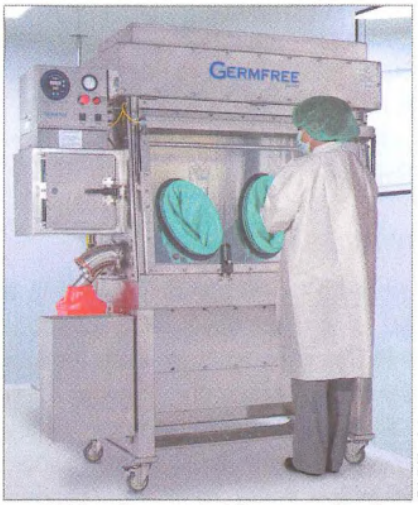
The SEC is the room that contains the PEC or multiple PECs. The SEC is commonly called the buffer area or buffer room because it provides a "buffer" of relatively clean air (ISO 7) around the PEC (ISO 5).

ANTEROOM

The anteroom (sometimes called the ante-area) connects the rest of the pharmacy to the buffer room (SEC). It contains a sink, cabinets and benches to facilitate garbing and preparation for compounding. Running down the center of the anteroom is a visible line called the line of demarcation, which separates the room into clean and dirty sections. The side closest to the other areas of the pharmacy is considered to be the dirty side of the anteroom. This is where hair and face covers are donned. The side of the anteroom closest to the buffer room is considered to be the clean side. Shoe covers must be applied one at a time while stepping over the demarcation line, placing the covered shoe on the clean side. Hand washing and donning of the gown occur on the clean side.

SEGREGATED COMPOUNDING AREA

An SCA is an option when a cleanroom is not able to be installed. It is a designated area with unclassified air; it does not have a buffer area or anteroom, and can only be used for certain CSPs.



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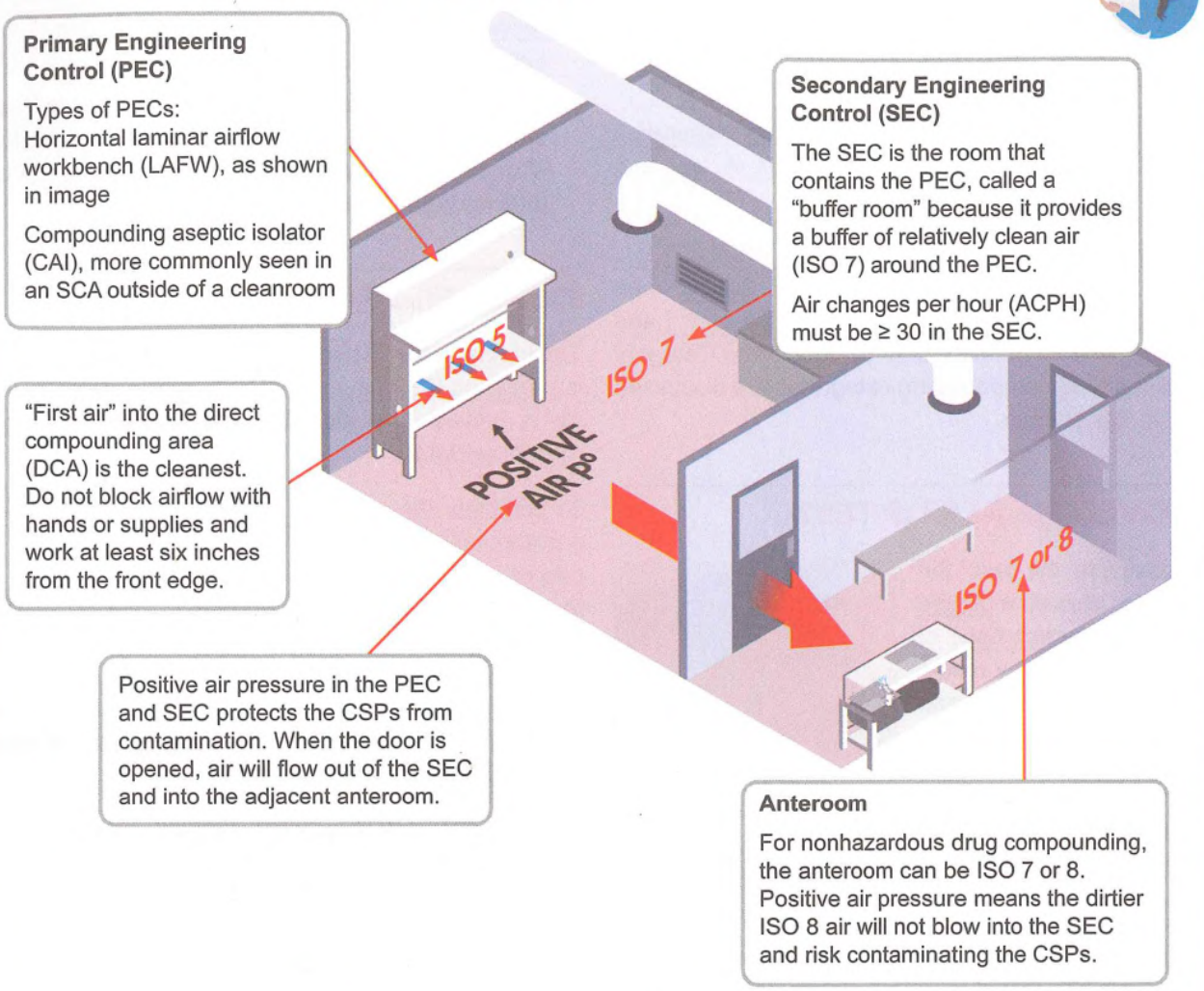
CAI in a Segregated Compounding Area

Segregated means kept apart from other areas of the pharmacy (e.g., the corner of the pharmacy) to minimize interruptions, contamination and noise. There must be a visible, defined perimeter around an SCA, and it cannot be located adjacent to food preparation, warehouses, restrooms, or windows/doors that connect to the outdoors or areas of high traffic flow (e.g., not near the pharmacy pick-up area).

SCAs are useful for satellite pharmacies that are a distance away from the main pharmacy in a large hospital, for infusion centers, clinics and small hospitals.

STERILE COMPOUNDING CLEANROOM



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PERSONNEL TRAINING AND TESTING

Each facility is required to have a designated person who is responsible for training and oversight of compounding personnel (i.e., staff). Any person who compounds or has direct oversight of compounders must have proper training, and all training must be documented, including:

- Initial training, where knowledge and competency of compounding must be demonstrated before performing any job functions independently.
- Continuous (ongoing) training, which must be completed at least every 12 months.

Other personnel with less direct/frequent contact with compounding space or materials (e.g., technician who restocks the sterile compounding area) must have training outlined in the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for the facility.

ASEPTIC PROCEDURES

Staff must demonstrate that they can follow adequate aseptic procedures for each of these items prior to independently compounding sterile products:

- Hand hygiene
- Garbing and gloving technique
- Cleaning and disinfecting procedures for the sterile space and equipment
- Sterile drug preparation

Adequate aseptic technique in hand hygiene, garbing and gloving is demonstrated by passing a garbing competency evaluation, which is completed ≥ 3 times and includes visual observation of procedures and the gloved fingertip test.

Adequate aseptic technique in sterile drug preparation is demonstrated by passing the media-fill test and surface sampling.

Both the gloved fingertip test and the media-fill test must be completed by a compounder initially, then every 6 months (if compounding only Category 1 and 2 CSPs) or every 3 months (if compounding Category 3 CSPs). CSP compounding categories are discussed later in this chapter.

GLOVED FINGERTIP TEST

To complete the test, the evaluator collects a gloved sample from each hand of the compounder by rolling the pads of the fingers and thumb over a surface which contains microbial growth agar [e.g., tryptic soy agar (TSA)]. If microorganisms are present, they will use the TSA as food and replicate.

Courtesy of Bio-Med QC, LLC
Gloved Fingertip Test

The plates are incubated (heated, to facilitate growth) and then inspected for microbial growth after ≥ 7 days, which will be visible as spots on the plates. Spots that form are called colony-forming units (CFUs) and indicate contamination was present on the gloves.

PASSING A GLOVED FINGERTIP TEST

- After garbing: passing requires three consecutive gloved fingertip samples, taken after garbing, with zero CFUs for both hands.
- After media-fill testing: passing requires at least one sample taken from each hand immediately after completion of the media-fill test, with ≤ 3 CFUs total for both hands.

MEDIA-FILL TEST

The media-fill test is used to determine if a compounder is preparing CSPs in an aseptic manner. It is followed by a gloved fingertip test and surface sampling (discussed later).

To complete the test, the compounder must prepare a compound with aseptic technique using a small IV bag or vial. Tryptic soy broth (TSB) takes the place of the drug in the preparation. TSB is a growth medium used by organisms to replicate. Multiple aseptic manipulations (transfers using the same syringe) are completed and then the product is incubated and checked for bacterial growth. Turbidity (cloudiness) means contamination is present.

PASSING A MEDIA-FILL TEST

If the liquid stays clear after 14 days of incubation, the compounder passed the test.

Courtesy of QI Medical, Inc.
Media Fill Test

ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING

TEMPERATURE AND HUMIDITY MONITORING

Temperatures and humidity must be kept in the appropriate range; monitoring and documentation on a temperature log sheet must be completed on days when compounding occurs or by using a continuous monitoring device. The SEC (buffer room) should be checked once daily and be maintained at 20°C (68°F), or cooler, with humidity at 60% or less (because excess moisture can lead to bacterial growth).

Temperature in the CSP storage areas (e.g., freezer, refrigerator) should be monitored at least daily. If the temperature is out of range, action must be taken and documented. Temperature monitoring devices must be calibrated at least every 12 months.

AIR AND SURFACE TESTING

Tests to ensure the environment for compounding sterile products is acceptably free of contaminants include:

- Air sampling for contaminants, performed at least every 6 months.
- Surface sampling for contaminants, performed every 30 days for all classified areas and pass-through spaces. Areas touched most frequently (e.g., inside the PEC, door handles) should be tested at the end of the compounding shift (dirtiest state), before cleaning and disinfecting.
- Air pressure testing, using a continuous monitoring device, to confirm the correct differential (difference in pressures) between two spaces and ensure that the airflow is unidirectional.

KEEPING THE STERILE COMPOUNDING AREA CLEAN

KEEP THE PEC RUNNING

PECs are preferably kept running at all times to help keep the surfaces clean. If there is a power outage, all compounding must stop, and the PECs will need to be cleaned and disinfected, then sterile 70% isopropyl alcohol (IPA) applied prior to re-initiation of compounding activities. The PEC must be on for at least 30 minutes before compounding can begin.

CLEANING THE PEC

The PEC is cleaned daily and anytime contamination is suspected. First, the PEC is cleaned with a detergent, then disinfected (a one-step disinfectant cleaner is also acceptable). Next, sterile 70% IPA is applied. A sporicidal disinfectant is required as well, but less frequently. Sterile 70% IPA is applied to the work surface throughout the day (every 30 minutes).

Sterile, low-lint wipes are used to clean the PEC. There are wipes that come pre-soaked with the appropriate agent. Alternatively, a spray bottle can be used to wet a dry wipe. Never spray inside the PEC.

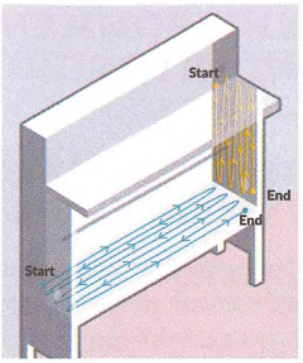
PECs are cleaned from top to bottom, back to front (see image on next page). This means that the cleanest areas are cleaned first, and the dirtiest areas are cleaned last. Use slightly overlapping, unidirectional strokes rather than circular motions. Use a new side of the wipe for the next area cleaned, and replace used wipes often.

CLEANING A HORIZONTAL LAMINAR AIRFLOW PEC

This is an example of the order of cleaning for a PEC.

1. Clean the ceiling of the hood, from back to front.
2. Clean the back of the hood (the grill over the HEPA filter), from top to bottom.
3. Clean the IV bar and hooks.
4. Clean the side walls starting from back to front, wiping up and down in a long sweeping motion.
5. Clean equipment kept in the hood (e.g., automated compounding device).
6. Clean the bottom surface (the work area) starting from back to front, with a side to side motion.

Do not start compounding until the surfaces have dried.



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Clean side walls and work surface from back to front in long sweeps.

CLEANING FREQUENCY

Required cleaning frequencies for each site in the cleanroom are shown in the table below. Each site requires cleaning, disinfecting and use of a sporicidal disinfectant.

SITE	CLEANING*	DISINFECTING*	SPORICIDAL DISINFECTANT**
PEC (and equipment inside)	Daily	Daily	Monthly
Pass-through chambers			
Work surfaces outside the PEC			
Floors			
Walls, doors	Monthly	Monthly	
Ceiling			
Storage shelves and bins			
Equipment outside the PEC			

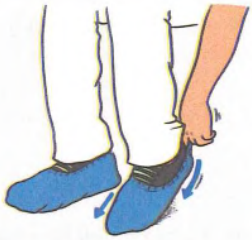
**Daily cleaning and disinfecting are only required on days when compounding occurs.*
***For Category 1 and 2 CSPs. Higher frequency needed for Category 3 CSPs.*

GARBING FOR STERILE COMPOUNDING

The following pages illustrate how to don garb for sterile compounding in a cleanroom, which should occur in the anteroom. The specific order of garbing should minimize contamination risk (i.e., dirtiest to cleanest). What is shown below is a general approach; the exact order of garbing is determined by the facility and must be documented in SOPs. Garb required when compounding in a CAI depends on the manufacturer's instructions, but minimally hand hygiene must be performed and sterile, powder-free gloves should be used inside the CAI (placed over the long gloves attached to the isolator).

Minimum garb attire includes a head cover (bonnet), facial hair cover, special shoes or shoe covers, a gown, powder-free gloves and a face mask. All garb should be low-lint. The staff have to be protected from chemical exposure (some drugs are more toxic than others), and the drug needs to be protected from contamination.

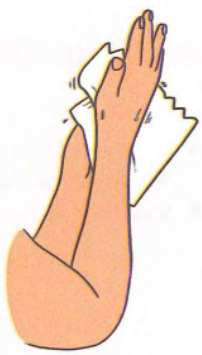
- Remove coats, rings, watches, bracelets and makeup before entering the anteroom. Artificial or long nails are not permitted.
- Makeup is not permitted because it sheds.



- Don head and facial hair covers and face masks, then shoe covers while stepping over the line of demarcation that separates the dirty side of the anteroom from the clean side. The anteroom should have a mirror that is used to check that the hair is completely covered. An eye shield is optional.

- Perform hand hygiene with soap and warm water.

- Under warm water, clean under fingernails to remove debris; brushes must not be used.
- Wash hands and forearms up to the elbows for at least 30 seconds.



- Dry hands and forearms with low-lint disposable towels or wipers.

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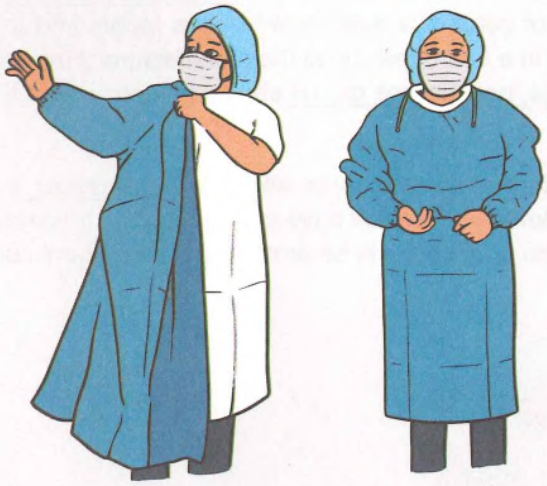
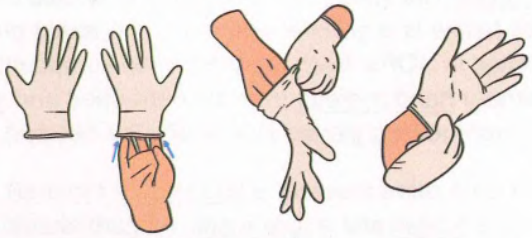
GARBING FOR STERILE COMPOUNDING continued



- Don a low-lint gown that fits snugly around the wrists and has an enclosure at the neck. Disposable gowns are preferred. If gowns are reusable, they must be laundered prior to reuse.



- Enter the buffer area (SEC).
- Apply an alcohol-based surgical hand scrub with persistent antimicrobial activity for the recommended amount of time (per manufacturer) and allow to dry. Chlorhexidine is used frequently, but serious allergic reactions can occur. Povidone-iodine can be used if there has been an allergic reaction to chlorhexidine.
- Don sterile, powder-free gloves.
- Sanitize the gloves with sterile 70% IPA routinely during compounding and whenever the gloves touch nonsterile surfaces. Do not resume compounding until the alcohol has dried. Continually inspect gloves for tears.

- All garb must be used when compounding with an isolator ("glovebox") unless the isolator's manufacturer provides written documentation that garb is not required.
- When the compounding is completed and the compounding personnel leaves the cleanroom/compounding area, all garb except for the gown goes into the disposal container. If the gown is not visibly soiled, it can be taken off and kept on the clean side of the anteroom in order to be re-worn for the current work shift. The gown cannot leave the anteroom if it is going to be re-worn. Hand hygiene is repeated, and all other garb is replaced when re-entering the compounding area.

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WHEN TO RE-GARB

- Garb should not be worn outside of the anteroom; if the anteroom has been exited, complete regarbing is required, including hand hygiene.
- If working in an SCA and it is left for any reason, regarbing is required.

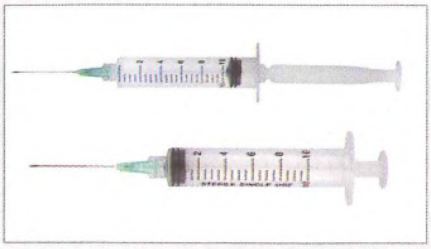
EQUIPMENT

COMMON PRODUCTS USED IN STERILE COMPOUNDING

SYRINGES AND NEEDLES

Syringes: hypodermic (parenteral) syringes are commonly used for sterile compounding to transfer drugs and additives from and into sterile containers (e.g., vials, IV bags). Syringes come with cannulas (needles) attached, or the cannula is separate and can be screwed onto the tip of the syringe. Hypodermic syringes are available in many sizes (e.g., 1 mL, 3 mL, 5 mL, 10 mL).

For drawing up medication, use the smallest syringe that can hold the desired amount of solution (for accuracy), but do not use a syringe the exact size of the amount needed (i.e., do not completely fill a syringe because the plunger can easily become dislodged). Select the closest syringe size above the size needed. Do not add two different syringe sizes for a dose.



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Needles: recapping needles can lead to needle-stick injuries. In sterile compounding, a needle-stick can injure the staff and cause contamination to the CSPs.

In general, do not recap needles. If the needle must be recapped, it is safer to place the cap on the work surface (rather than holding it) and slip the tip of the needle into the cap, without letting the needle tip touch the work surface.

It is preferable to use syringes with safety features, such as safety shields that cover the needle immediately after use.

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Luer Locks: luer locks make secure, leak-free connections between syringes, needles, catheters and IV lines. The ends twist together to form a tight seal. A luer lock can be used during compounding to facilitate mixing or transferring fluids between drug delivery devices or IV sets. A luer lock tip of a syringe is also designed to screw into the luer lock connector on a patient's IV access catheter or onto a needle during drug administration.

AMPULES AND VIALS

Ampules: ampules are small, sealed glass containers that contain liquid medication. The ampule has a long neck and is broken by snapping the neck at the narrowest part (where the glass is weakest). This can introduce glass particles into the drug solution. A filter needle or filter straw is required when withdrawing liquid from the ampule to remove the glass.

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Vials that contain liquids: a volume of drug from the vial is drawn up in a syringe, which can then be added to an IV bag.

The compounder will inject a volume of air equal to the volume of drug that is withdrawn to equalize the pressure.

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Vials that contain lyophilized or freeze-dried powder: the powder needs to be reconstituted by adding a diluent (e.g., sterile water for injection, bacteriostatic water for injection, a diluent supplied by the manufacturer). Drugs may be commercially available as powders because they are unstable as a solution. The image to the right shows a vial of lyophilized powder before and after reconstitution.

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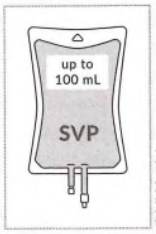
IV BAGS

Small volume parenteral (SVP): IV bags or syringes that contain a small volume (100 mL or less) of fluid. SVPs can contain plain fluid, such as NS or D5W, that can be used as a diluent for a compounded product (i.e., drug is added to the SVP). SVPs can also contain a liquid drug with or without a diluent. SVPs can be compounded in the pharmacy or come in ready-to-use containers from the manufacturer (see section below).

SVPs are often "piggybacked" onto a large volume parenteral (LVP). These are called IV piggybacks (IVPBs). This reduces the need to have multiple lines running into the patient. The drugs will mix together in the tubing so they must be compatible in the IV line.



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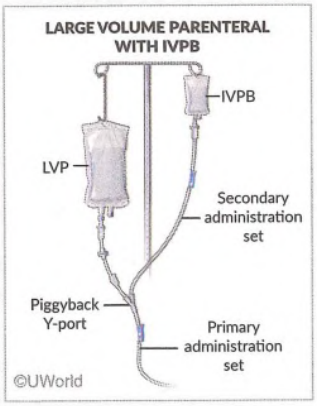
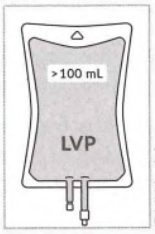


Large volume parenteral (LVP): IV containers that contain more than 100 mL. Liter bags are commonly used to provide fluids, and are available in a variety of formulations: NS, ½NS, D5W, D5½NS, D5NS, Lactated Ringer's (LR) and others used less commonly, including D10NS, D2.5½NS, D5⅓NS, D5¼NS. Parenteral nutrition (PN) for adults is prepared as an LVP.



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READY-TO-USE STERILE MEDICATIONS

Ready-to-use medications (RTUs): available as prepared IV bags or prefilled syringes. The pharmacy staff opens the outer container and applies the patient label. These are not compounded. The expiration date is provided by the manufacturer, and is on the packaging.

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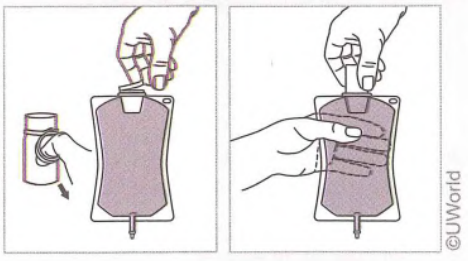
Ready-to-use vial/bag systems (*ADD-Vantage*, *Minibag Plus*, others): vials and bags are supplied together. The vial can be attached to the bag at the bedside by the nurse for immediate use (and is not considered compounding). If the vial is attached in the pharmacy cleanroom (in an ISO 5 hood inside an ISO 7 buffer room), it can be saved for an extended period of time as indicated by the manufacturer on the packaging. This is considered compounding and is subject to USP 797 requirements. Each of the proprietary bag and vial systems are different in design, but all involve an activation step of releasing IV fluid into the drug vial and then returning the reconstituted drug back into the bag.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TECHNOLOGY IN STERILE COMPOUNDING

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The role of technology in sterile compounding is increasing, with more products available and more organizations supporting the role of technology solutions to improve patient safety. Commonly used automated equipment includes:

- Automated compounding devices (ACDs) that aseptically transfer ingredients into a sterile final container, such as when compounding parenteral nutrition (see image above). This replaces the need for manual transfer of ingredients and reduces error and contamination risk. ACDs should be interfaced with the electronic health record to prevent transcription errors. Other benefits include clinical decision support warnings when a solution has a risk of error (e.g., osmolarity exceeds the maximum limit, solution contents are incompatible).
- IV workflow management systems (IVWMS), also called IV room assisted workflow technology, that automate the preparation, verification, tracking and documentation of CSPs. IVWMS include technology to identify medications for compounding through barcode scanning, as well as photo capture or measurement of specific gravity or density for CSP verification.
- IV robots used to compound solutions with a high volume of use and/or products that require large batch preparations.

WORKFLOW FOR CSP PREPARATION

- Review the order (must be done by a pharmacist).
- Gather and inspect all materials.
- Clean hood. Place only needed items in the hood.
- Prepare CSPs with aseptic technique.
- Properly dispose of syringes and needles into the sharps container (see the Medication Safety & Quality Improvement chapter).
- Visually inspect all finished CSPs.
- Complete terminal sterilization and/or sterility testing, if appropriate.

SETTING UP ITEMS IN THE STERILE HOOD

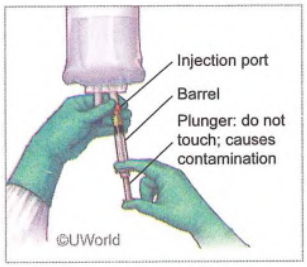
Only required items should be placed in the hood. No paper, pens, labels, calculators or trays.

- All components (e.g., outer wrapping for a sterile syringe or IV bag) should be wiped off with sterile 70% IPA to remove contaminants and dust prior to being brought into the PEC.
- All work within the PEC must be performed at least six inches from the front, where there is less chance that ISO 5 air has mingled with ISO 7 air in the buffer room. Items should not be within six inches of the back of the hood.
- Nothing should be between the sterile objects and the HEPA filter. To avoid blocking first air, place all items in a horizontal airflow hood side-by-side and, in a vertical airflow hood, do not place anything above sterile objects.
- Sterile syringes and other equipment are individually wrapped, and must be opened along the seal (not torn open) inside the PEC to avoid shedding (i.e., release of particles) in the sterile space. Do not touch sterile components (e.g., syringe tip or plunger), even with gloved hands.
- Move waste out of the PEC shortly after it is created; do not let it accumulate inside the sterile hood.

TRANSFERRING SOLUTIONS

- Swab the rubber top of the vial (or ampule neck) and port on the IV bag with sterile 70% IPA, and wait for it to air dry; do not blow on or wave over it to dry it faster.
- Drug powders are reconstituted into a liquid by introducing a diluent such as sterile water for injection, bacteriostatic water for injection (which is sterile) or a diluent provided by the manufacturer. In some cases, saline or dextrose are used.

- Prior to withdrawing any liquid from a vial (e.g., diluent, drug), inject a volume of air equal to the volume of fluid to be removed.
- Puncture the rubber top of the vial with the needle, bevel up and at a 45-degree angle. Then bring the syringe straight up to a 90-degree angle while the needle penetrates the stopper; press the syringe down so that the needle is inserted into the vial. Depress the plunger of the syringe, emptying the air into the vial. Invert the vial with the attached syringe. Draw up the amount of liquid required. Withdraw the needle from the vial. In the case of a multi-dose vial, the rubber cap will close, sealing the contents of the vial.
- The volume of solution drawn into a syringe is measured at the point of contact between the rubber piston and the side of the syringe barrel.
- Coring occurs when a small piece of rubber from the stopper is aspirated into the needle, and is put into the solution in the vial. The rubber piece can get injected into a patient. Look for small cored pieces floating near the top of the solution during the visual inspection of the CSP.
- If the medication is in a glass ampule, open the ampule by snapping the neck away from you. Tilt the ampule, then withdraw the fluid using a filter straw or filter needle to remove any glass particles that may have fallen into the ampule. The needle must be changed before injecting the syringe contents into an IV bag to avoid introducing glass or particles into the bag. A standard needle could be used to withdraw the drug from the ampule, as long as it is then replaced with a filter device before the drug is pushed out of the syringe.



- Inject solutions from the syringe into the IV bag via the injection port.

VISUAL INSPECTION

- The supervising pharmacist should verify that the correct volume of product is in the syringe before compounding continues. This is the safest method because the pharmacist can see the actual volume in the syringe. The "syringe pull-back method" is when the pharmacist verifies the volume in an empty syringe after the compounding is completed; the technician "pulls-back" the plunger of the syringe to the volume of product that was added into the IV admixture and places the empty syringe next to the vial. This method relies on memory and is not recommended.
- Finished CSPs are visually inspected immediately after preparation, against a dark background, for particulates, cored pieces, precipitates and cloudiness. The container should be lightly squeezed to check for leakage.

STERILITY TESTING

Sterility is the absence of viable microorganisms. After a sterile compound has been made, sterility testing can be performed to ensure the absence of contamination. Testing for sterility is required for certain categories of CSPs (see Establishing Beyond-Use Dates section).

STERILIZATION

Terminal sterilization is required for CSPs that are compounded with any nonsterile ingredients. Terminal sterilization methods include steam sterilization (with an autoclave), dry heat sterilization (depyrogenation) and filtration.

Do not use heat on heat-sensitive drugs (e.g., proteins, including hormones and insulin). CSPs that are heat-labile can be sterilized with filtration using a sterile 0.22-micron filter. The filter will remove microorganisms larger than 0.22 microns, including bacteria, viruses, yeast and fungi.

If filtering is used, the manufacturer of the filter might require a test for filter integrity, such as the bubble point test. This test determines the pressure required to see "bubbles" out of a filter.

PYROGEN (BACTERIAL ENDOTOXIN) TESTING

Endotoxins, a type of pyrogen, are produced by both gram-positive and gram-negative bacteria and fungi. Endotoxins represent a serious threat to patient safety. Pyrogens can come from using equipment (e.g., glassware, utensils) washed with tap water. To avoid this issue, glassware and utensils should be rinsed with sterile water and depyrogenated with dry heat sterilization.

Any CSPs made from nonsterile components must be tested for endotoxins.

ESTABLISHING BEYOND-USE DATES

USP categorizes CSPs by the risk of contamination, which is based on the conditions they are made in, aseptic processing, ingredients and equipment used, whether sterility testing is performed and the storage conditions. A sterile product that is contaminated with microorganisms or any other type of contaminant can cause severe illness and death.

The risk levels are Category 1, 2 and 3. Category 1 CSPs have a higher risk of contamination than Category 3 CSPs. These risk levels are then used to determine an appropriate beyond-use date (BUD), which is the date and time after which the CSP should not be used.

CATEGORY 1 STERILE COMPOUNDING

Category 1 CSPs are those prepared in an ISO 5 PEC that is placed in a segregated compounding area (SCA), which has unclassified air. Because these have a higher risk for contamination, they require shorter BUDs compared to Category 2 or 3 CSPs, and no sterility testing is required. The BUD for a CSP made in an SCA is ≤ 12 hours at controlled room temperature, or ≤ 24 hours if refrigerated.

CATEGORY 2 STERILE COMPOUNDING

Category 2 CSPs are made in a cleanroom suite (i.e., an ISO 5 PEC located in an ISO 7 SEC). They can have longer BUDs compared to Category 1 CSPs. Sterility testing may be required based on the BUD assignment (i.e., a longer BUD can be assigned if sterility testing was performed).

CATEGORY 3 STERILE COMPOUNDING

Category 3 CSPs are made in accordance with specific requirements, which allows for longer BUDs, up to 180 days. Some of these requirements include sterility testing, endotoxin testing, environmental monitoring and personnel qualifications.

STERILE COMPOUNDING FOR EMERGENCIES

The requirements described in this chapter for compounding sterile products, including putting on protective garb and cleaning the PEC, take time.

In certain circumstances, IV drugs are needed immediately, with no time for aseptic preparation, such as in an ambulance or during a code blue when quick action is needed to save a life. This is emergency use (also called immediate-use), and because the drug has been prepared for that patient under suboptimal conditions for sterility, the CSP is assigned a short BUD of 4 hours, after which the drug can no longer be used and must be discarded.

DETERMINING THE BEYOND-USE DATE BASED ON CSP CATEGORY

The BUD is determined by the CSP Category and the stability/expiration date of the individual ingredients, whichever is shorter.

Each Category of CSP has a maximum BUD limit (see Study Tip Gal on next page), but the specific BUD will vary based on preparation conditions (e.g., aseptic preparation versus terminal sterilization), storage conditions, sterility testing and other criteria. A CSP stored in a colder temperature (e.g., refrigerator, freezer) or that underwent sterility testing will generally have a longer BUD.

BEYOND-USE DATES FOR COMPOUNDED STERILE PRODUCTS

CSP CATEGORY	ENVIRONMENT	ROOM TEMP BUD LIMIT*	REFRIGERATED BUD LIMIT*	FROZEN BUD LIMIT*
Immediate-use	Uncontrolled (no PEC)	4 hours (for any storage condition)		
Category 1	ISO 5 PEC in SCA	12 hours	24 hours	N/A
Category 2	ISO 5 PEC in cleanroom	1-45 days	4-60 days	45-90 days
Category 3	ISO 5 PEC in cleanroom + additional requirements	60-90 days	90-120 days	120-180 days

**Temperatures should be kept as follows: controlled room temperature 20 to 25°C, refrigerator 2 to 8°C, freezer -25 to -10°C.*

BUDS FOR SINGLE-DOSE CONTAINERS (SDC) AND MULTI-DOSE CONTAINERS (MDC)

The BUDs in the table below are for the vials, bags, bottles, syringes and ampules that contain the ingredients that are being put into CSPs. For example, a single-dose 1 gram vial of vancomycin, once opened, can be used for up to 12 hours if the vial was opened in and remains in the PEC, which has ISO 5 air.

DOSE	BUD
SDC – vial, bag, bottle, syringe, inside an ISO 5 environment	Up to 12 hours from puncture or opening
SDC – ampule, inside or outside an ISO 5 environment	Any unused contents left in the ampule cannot be stored and must be discarded
MDC - inside or outside an ISO 5 environment	Up to 28 days from puncture or opening

DOCUMENTATION

INTERNAL RECORDS

Sterile compounding records can include the master formulation record and the compounding record, similar to nonsterile compounding (see the Nonsterile Compounding chapter). However, these are only required in certain situations.

- The master formulation record is needed for CSPs prepared for more than one patient or from nonsterile ingredients.
- The compounding record is needed for Category 1, 2 and 3 CSPs, and for any immediate-use CSPs prepared for more than one patient. The prescription or medication order can serve as the compounding record. If a CSP is prepared for more than one patient or from nonsterile ingredients, the vendor, lot number and expiration date for each component must be recorded.

LABEL REQUIREMENTS

CSP labels (i.e., the information on the immediate container) must have the names and amounts or concentrations of ingredients, the total volume, the BUD, the dosage form, the route of administration, the storage requirements, an internal identification number (e.g., order number, barcode) and other information for safe use.

Auxiliary labels should be placed on CSPs that require special handling (e.g., if a filter or light protection is required, if the CSP should not be refrigerated).

High-alert medications (defined by ISMP) are drugs that have a high risk of causing significant patient harm when used incorrectly. Appropriate warning labels such as "Contains Potassium" or "Warning: Paralyzing Agent" should be used.

CSP QUALITY ASSURANCE

Each compounding facility must have established quality assurance (QA) and quality control (QC) programs documented in their SOPs. QA ensures that the compounding process is consistent in meeting quality standards, whereas QC includes the sampling, testing and documentation of results that ensures each CSP has met quality standards. The QA and QC plans should minimally include:

- Adherence to procedures
- Error prevention and detection
- Evaluation of complaints
- Investigations and corrective actions

If a problem has been identified or a medication error or safety issue has occurred, a root cause analysis should be initiated as soon as possible (see the Medication Safety & Quality Improvement chapter). A failure mode and effects analysis of new techniques can identify problems with new procedures in advance.

RECALLS

When CSPs are dispensed before receiving the results of their sterility tests, there must be a written procedure in place to take appropriate action if the finalized testing shows that the CSP did not meet specifications. Actions include immediate notification of the prescriber, recall of dispensed CSPs, quarantine of remaining stock and investigation of other lots that could be affected.

If the CPS fails sterility testing, there should be an investigation of aseptic technique, environmental control and other sterility assurance measures to determine the source of contamination and improve the methods or processes.

Select Guidelines/References

United States Pharmacopeia (2022). General Chapter 797. Pharmaceutical Compounding—Sterile Preparations. USP-NF. Rockville, MD: United States Pharmacopeia. DOI: https://doi.org/10.31003/USPNF_M99925_06_01

Institute for Safe Medication Practices (ISMP). ISMP Guidelines for Sterile Compounding and the Safe Use of Sterile Compounding Technology. ISMP; 2022.

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CHAPTER 17

COMPOUNDING WITH HAZARDOUS DRUGS

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= Study Tip Gal = Key Drugs Guy

HAZARDOUS DRUGS

Hazardous drugs (HDs) can cause toxicity to the healthcare workers who handle them in any manner, including when unloading drugs in the receiving dock, stocking shelves, preparing drugs in the pharmacy, administering drugs to a patient and obtaining and cleaning up body fluids that contain HD residue.

HDs require workspaces, equipment, devices and procedures that are designed to reduce exposure (e.g., dermal absorption, mucosal absorption, inhalation) of the drug to the staff. The standards for handling HDs are set by the U.S. Pharmacopeia (USP) in chapter 800. These are in addition to the requirements for nonsterile compounding (outlined in USP chapter 795) or sterile compounding (outlined in USP chapter 797). The Nonsterile Compounding and Sterile Compounding chapters in this course book should be reviewed prior to this chapter.

THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH (NIOSH)

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) determines which drugs are hazardous. NIOSH keeps a list of all HDs called the *NIOSH List of Antineoplastic and Other Hazardous Drugs in Healthcare Settings* (see Key Drugs Guy below). A drug is considered hazardous if it is:

- Carcinogenic (cancer-causing)
- Teratogenic (causes congenital abnormalities) or associated with other developmental toxicity
- Toxic to reproduction (e.g., causes infertility)
- Genotoxic (damages DNA, which can cause cancer)
- Toxic to organs at low doses
- Similar in structure or toxicity profile to a drug previously determined to be hazardous

SELECT HAZARDOUS KEY DRUGS ON THE NIOSH LIST

Antineoplastic Drugs (Chemotherapeutics)

Non-Antineoplastic Hazardous Drugs:

5 Alpha-Reductase Inhibitors
Dutasteride, finasteride

Abortifacients
Mifepristone, misoprostol

Anticoagulants
Warfarin

Antivirals
Cidofovir, ganciclovir, valganciclovir

Antiseizure Medications
Carbamazepine, oxcarbazepine, fosphenytoin, phenytoin, topiramate, valproate

Benzodiazepines
Clonazepam, temazepam

Diabetes Medications
Exenatide

Dyslipidemia Medications
Lomitapide

Heart Failure Medications
Spironolactone

Hepatitis Medications
Ribavirin

PAH Medications
Ambrisentan, bosentan, macitentan, riociguat

Retinoic Acid Derivatives
Tretinoin

SSRIs
Paroxetine

Thionamides
Methimazole, propylthiouracil

Transplant Medications
Cyclosporine, mycophenolate, tacrolimus, sirolimus

Treatment for Autoimmune Conditions
Acitretin, azathioprine, fingolimod, leflunomide, teriflunomide

Hormonal Agents
Androgens (e.g., testosterone)

Estrogens (e.g., estradiol)

Oxytocin

Progestins (e.g., medroxyprogesterone)

SERD/SERMs (e.g., fulvestrant, raloxifene, tamoxifen)

Ulipristal

SAFETY DATA SHEETS (SDS)

Safety Data Sheets (SDS, previously called MSDS) are a series of safety documents required by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to be accessible to all employees who are working with hazardous materials, including drugs. Each HD has its own document that provides guidance on drug-specific safety information, including:

- Personal protective equipment (PPE)
- First aid procedures
- Spill clean-up procedures

HAZARD COMMUNICATION PROGRAM

Each facility must have a designated person who is responsible for creating Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) focused on worker safety during all aspects of HD handling. This hazard communication program includes a written plan that details implementation of HD safety procedures, proper training of personnel, competency assessment and maintaining all required HD documentation. Pharmacies must maintain a list of all HDs stocked, and the list must be reviewed every 12 months or whenever a new drug or dosage form is stocked or used. Prior to handling any HDs, both males and females with reproductive capability must confirm in writing that they understand the risks associated with handling HDs.

ASSESSING RISK

The USP 800 requirements for safe handling of HDs are extensive, but some activities and drugs are not as risky as others. Some examples of lower-risk activities include counting and packaging tablets. A pharmacy can conduct an Assessment of Risk (AoR) to avoid having to follow all USP 800 requirements for drugs that will be dispensed without manipulation.

As part of the AoR, SOPs must be developed, which include actions to limit staff exposure, such as:

- Putting HDs in distinctive shelf bins to alert staff
- Wearing chemotherapy gloves when handling HDs
- Dedicating a counting tray and spatula for counting HDs and decontaminating both after use
- Placing prepared HD containers into a sealable plastic bag

If any manipulation of the low-risk HD is required (e.g., using powder to prepare a solution, cutting tablets in half, adding a vial of HD to a large volume fluid), USP 800 requirements must be followed. If no AoR is conducted, the pharmacy must follow the full USP 800 requirements. AoR documents must be reviewed at least every 12 months.

SPACE REQUIREMENTS FOR HAZARDOUS DRUG COMPOUNDING

PHYSICAL SPACE BASICS

Hoods and buffer rooms used for compounding HDs often include the word containment:

- Containment-primary engineering control (C-PEC)
- Containment-secondary engineering control (C-SEC)
- Containment-segregated compounding area (C-SCA)
- Compounding aseptic containment isolator (CACI)

Containment is required to keep hazardous drugs, particles and vapors contained within the space due to toxicity risk. Negative air pressure protects the worker from being exposed to the HDs they work with (see section on air handling).

C-PECS FOR HAZARDOUS DRUG COMPOUNDING

Both sterile and nonsterile hazardous compounds must be prepared in a C-PEC that is located in a C-SEC or C-SCA. Types of C-PECs are listed below.

- Biological safety cabinets (BSCs) have unidirectional air flow (e.g., vertical laminar airflow, where air flows downwards from the HEPA filter at the top of the hood). For sterile HD compounding, the BSC must be Class II (most common) or Class III.
- Containment ventilated enclosures (CVEs) are powder containment hoods with HEPA-filtered air and negative air pressure used for nonsterile compounding only.
- Compounding aseptic containment isolators (CACIs) are closed-front C-PECs (commonly called "gloveboxes") that can be located in a buffer room (C-SEC), but are often located in a C-SCA (see image on next page).

NONSTERILE AND STERILE HD COMPOUNDING IN THE SAME SPACE

While it is preferable to keep nonsterile and sterile compounding space separate, an exception can be made if these requirements are met:

- The C-SEC maintains ISO 7 air even when it is being used for nonsterile HD compounding.
- Separate sterile and nonsterile C-PECs in the same C-SEC must be kept at least 1 meter apart.
- Particle-generating activity, such as working with powders, cannot be performed at the same time as sterile compounding in the same C-SEC.
- Occasionally nonsterile HD compounding can be completed in a sterile C-PEC, but it must be properly decontaminated, cleaned and disinfected before compounding sterile HDs.

AIR HANDLING

NEGATIVE AIR PRESSURE

C-SECs and C-SCAs are required to have negative air pressure. This means that the air pressure inside the space is lower than the air pressure outside the space. The negative pressure will cause the air inside the space (which is potentially contaminated) to not flow outwards into the non-contaminated areas.

- Negative air pressure in most C-PECs causes the air flowing in (e.g., from the HEPA filter at the top of the hood) to flow away from the person standing in front of the hood, and then to flow out of the C-PEC through the external exhaust at the top of the hood.
- Negative air pressure in the C-SEC keeps air from flowing into the anteroom. It is removed through the room exhaust.
- The anteroom has positive air pressure. For sterile HD compounding, the negative pressure in the C-SEC pulls air from the anteroom into the C-SEC, so the air in the anteroom must be maintained at ISO 7 (same as the C-SEC) to avoid dirtier air co-mingling and contaminating sterile products.

AIR CHANGES

Air in spaces used for HD compounding can become contaminated and needs to be replaced regularly. The air changes per hour (ACPH) is the number of times (per hour) that the air is replaced in the room.

- In a space where nonsterile HDs are compounded there must be at least 12 ACPH.
- In a sterile C-SEC there must be at least 30 ACPH (same as for any sterile compounding).
- In a C-SCA there must be at least 12 ACPH.

EXTERNAL EXHAUST

Air that has been contaminated with HDs must be externally exhausted. This means that the air is moved out of the space (from the C-PEC, the C-SEC or the C-SCA) and cannot be recirculated and returned to the room. It is sent outside of the building and takes any contamination out with it.

REDUNDANT HEPA FILTERS INSTEAD OF EXTERNAL EXHAUST

Community pharmacies that prepare HDs can be located in areas that would not welcome contaminated air (e.g., a busy park, a residential neighborhood). An alternative option to an external exhaust (for nonsterile HD compounding only) is to use redundant HEPA filters, where air is passed through two or more HEPA filters in a series before returning to the compounding space.

HAZARDOUS DRUG STORAGE

HDs must be stored separately from non-HDs. They should be stored in a room with external ventilation and negative-pressure, with at least 12 ACPH. Select HDs may be stored with non-HDs (e.g., non-antineoplastic HDs, antineoplastic HDs in final dosage forms) if defined in the written AoR.

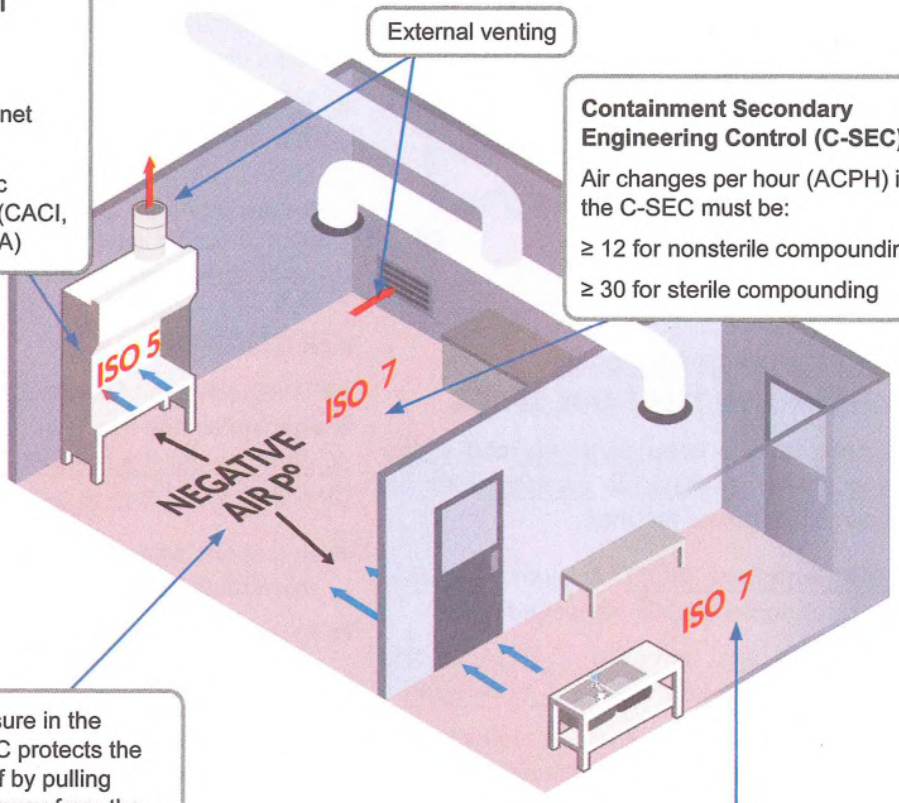
NEGATIVE PRESSURE HAZARDOUS DRUG CLEANROOM

Containment Primary Engineering Control (C-PEC)

Types of C-PECS:

Biological safety cabinet (pictured)

Compounding aseptic containment isolator (CACI, often used in a C-SCA)



Containment Secondary Engineering Control (C-SEC)

Air changes per hour (ACPH) in the C-SEC must be:

≥ 12 for nonsterile compounding

≥ 30 for sterile compounding

Negative air pressure in the C-PEC and C-SEC protects the compounding staff by pulling contaminated air away from the worker. External ventilation then removes hazardous contaminants and sends them outside.

Anteroom

For sterile hazardous drug compounding, the anteroom must be ISO 7. Negative air pressure in the C-SEC means the air will blow from the anteroom into the C-SEC; air must be ISO 7 to prevent contaminating sterile products.

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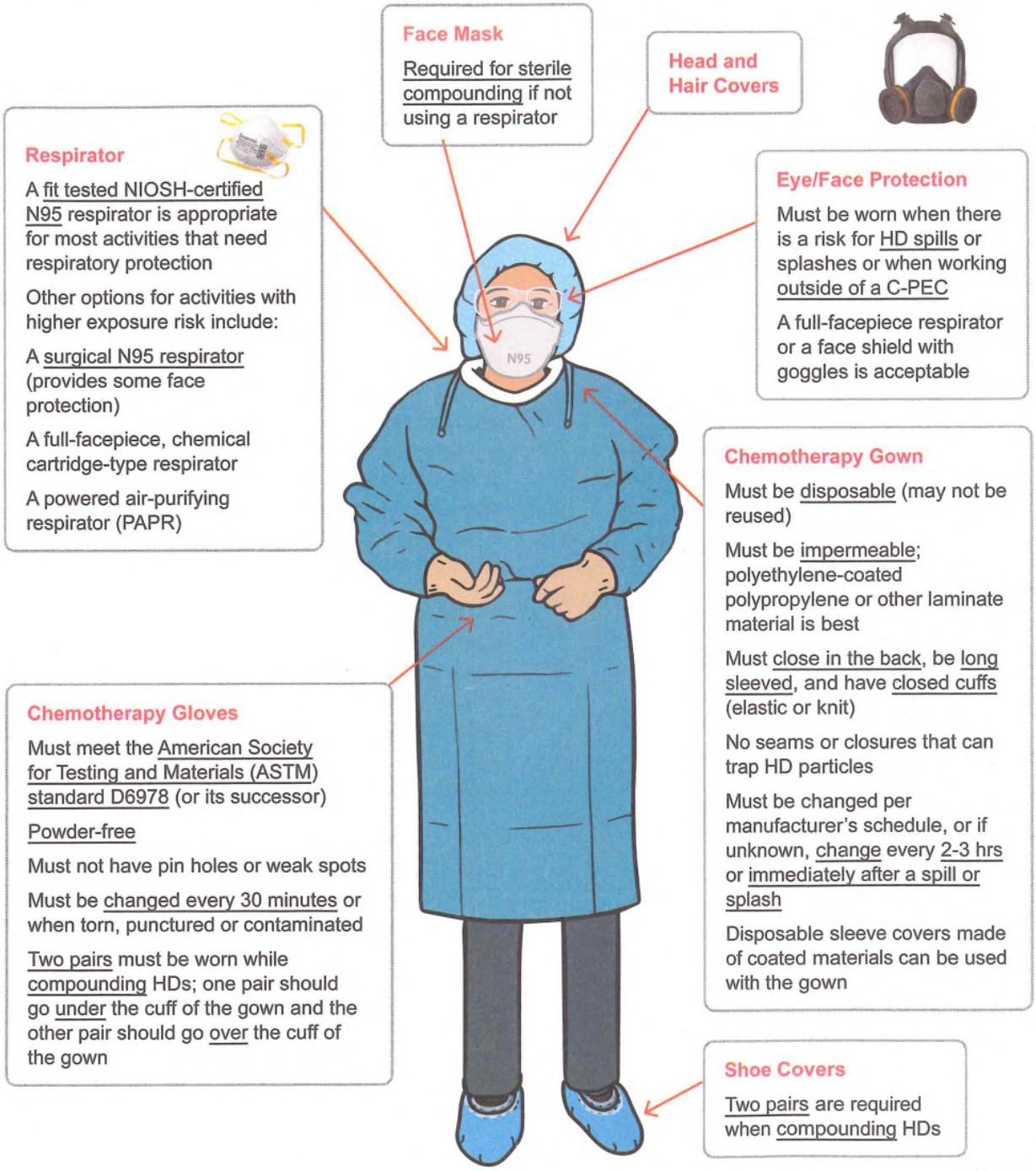
GARB FOR HAZARDOUS DRUGS

Appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) must be worn during each activity involving HDs: receiving, storage, transporting, compounding (sterile and nonsterile), administration, cleaning and spill control. This can include hair and shoe covers, respiratory protection or a face mask (for sterile compounding), and chemotherapy gowns and gloves. It can also include more advanced eye/face and respiratory protection if there is a risk of spills or splashes.

Garb required for HD compounding is described in the image below. Garb for compounding is donned in the anteroom. The order in which the garb should be donned is from dirtiest to cleanest.



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RESPIRATORY PROTECTION

A fit-tested, NIOSH-certified N95 respirator is sufficient for most HD compounding, but does not provide adequate protection against gases, vapors or direct liquid splashes. A surgical N95 respirator adds some protection against splashes and droplets.

N95 respirator mask

sasapanchenko/ stock.adobe.com

Additional respiratory protection is needed in situations with direct HD exposure, including when cleaning up large HD spills, cleaning the undertray of a C-PEC, or if there is a known or suspected airborne exposure to HD powders or vapors. For any of these situations, one of the following should be worn:

- A fit-tested respirator mask with attached gas canisters (a "gas mask"); see left picture below.

Respirator mask with gas canisters

Powered Air-Purifying Respirator (PAPR)

© CDC.gov

- A powered air-purifying respirator (PAPR) that blows air through the filter to the user (see right picture above). PAPRs are easier to breathe through than the gas mask but require a charged battery to work properly.

GARB FOR ADMINISTRATION

Appropriate PPE must be worn when administering HDs. Two pairs of chemotherapy gloves are required when administering antineoplastic HDs and performing any manipulation of HDs (e.g., crushing tablets). A single pair of gloves can be used for handling intact tablets or capsules. A chemotherapy gown is required when administering injectable HDs and recommended when administering other HDs (e.g., oral).

If there is a risk of spills/splashes (e.g., administration of an irrigation), face and eye protection should be worn.

GARB FOR RECEIVING, STORAGE AND TRANSPORT

When HDs are unpacked and are not contained in plastic, the staff member should wear an elastomeric half-mask, with a multi-gas cartridge and P100-filter, until assessment of the packaging integrity ensures that no breakage or spillage occurred during transport. A single pair of chemotherapy gloves can be used for HD receiving and storage.

When HDs need to be transported, they must be properly labeled and packaged to minimize the risk of spillage or breakage. Pneumatic tube systems cannot be used to transport any liquid HDs or any antineoplastics because of the potential for breakage and contamination.

HAZARDOUS DRUG EQUIPMENT AND PREPARATION

Equipment used for HD compounding, including routine equipment such as counting trays and spatulas, should be dedicated for HD preparation and cleaned after use, or they should be disposable (i.e., single use only). Equipment that cannot be thoroughly sanitized (e.g., automated counting or packaging machines) should not be used for HDs as any residue could contaminate other drugs.

Pharmacy and nursing staff should avoid manipulating oral HDs. If a liquid formulation of the drug is available, it should be used. If manipulation is required (e.g., crushing tablets, opening capsules) it should be done in a C-PEC. If this is not feasible, PPE must be worn and manipulation should be done in a plastic bag to contain any dust or particles.

When compounding with HDs, air should not be injected into a vial (as you generally would in sterile compounding). Positive pressure in the vial can cause the HD to spray out around the needle, contaminating the workspace and endangering personnel. Instead, the negative-pressure technique or a closed-system transfer device (CSTD) should be used.

NEGATIVE-PRESSURE TECHNIQUE

First, pull the plunger back to fill the syringe with a volume of air equal to the volume of drug to be removed. Insert the needle into the vial, invert the vial and pull on the plunger. This will create a vacuum that pulls the drug out of the vial and into the syringe. This should be done in small increments, pausing to allow the air to move out of the syringe and into the vial, until the desired volume of drug has been drawn up.

CLOSED-SYSTEM TRANSFER DEVICES

Example of a Closed System Transfer Device

CSTDs are vial transfer systems that offer an additional level of protection against HD exposure. They have a built-in valve that equalizes the air pressure when fluid is added or withdrawn from the vial.

CSTDs should be used to transfer HDs whenever possible as they keep the HDs contained within the device. CSTDs reduce leaks and spills when withdrawing solutions from vials, injecting solutions into IV bags, reconstituting dried powders into solutions and during syringe to syringe transfers. CSTDs are recommended when compounding HDs and required for administering antineoplastics.

LABEL REQUIREMENTS

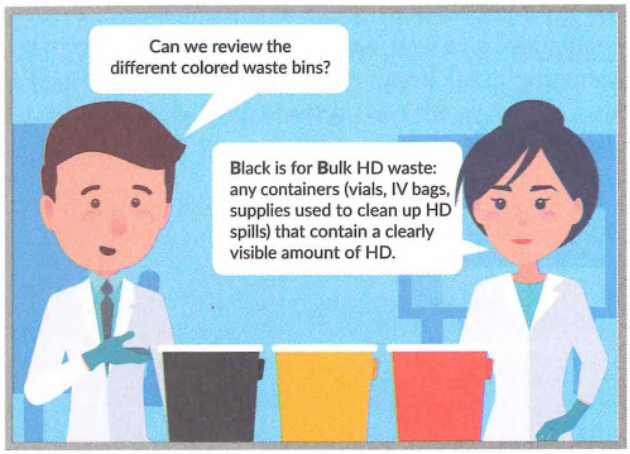
All hazardous preparations must have a label that reads "Chemotherapy – dispose of properly" or something similar. Any special handling precaution should also be clearly stated on the label.

HAZARDOUS DRUG DISPOSAL

All PPE worn when handling HDs is considered contaminated. The outer chemotherapy gloves worn during compounding are discarded in a yellow trace chemotherapy waste bin located inside the C-PEC or put in a sealable bag if discarding outside the C-PEC. Remove the outer glove before handling and labeling the compounded preparation. The rest of the garb (e.g., chemotherapy gown, shoe covers) must be taken off before exiting the negative-pressure area (the C-SEC or C-SCA) and thrown away in the yellow trace chemotherapy waste bin.

All trace hazardous waste (i.e., empty vials, empty syringes, empty IV bags, IV tubes) is thrown away in a yellow container, which will be destroyed by incineration.

Bulk hazardous waste, which includes unused or partially empty IV bags, syringes and vials, are thrown away in a black container, which will be incinerated.



HAZARDOUS DRUG COMPOUNDING CLEANING SPECIFICS

SANITIZATION

All areas and equipment used for handling HDs must be sanitized, which includes deactivating, decontaminating and cleaning, at least once daily. Sterile compounding areas and equipment must be disinfected as a final step. It is important to perform the sanitizing steps in the correct order; if the disinfecting step is completed before the deactivating step, it will spread the HD residue.

DEACTIVATION
Make compound inert/inactive
Peroxide or sodium hypochlorite (2% bleach)

DECONTAMINATION
Remove HD residue
Alcohol, water, peroxide or sodium hypochlorite (2% bleach)

CLEANING
Remove dirt and microbial contamination
Germicidal detergent

DISINFECTION
(Sterile Compounding Only)
Destroy microorganisms
EPA-registered disinfectant or 70% isopropyl alcohol

**EPA = Environmental Protection Agency*

Wetted wipes should be used for the sanitizing agents instead of a spray bottle, because directly spraying onto the surfaces and equipment can cause HD residue to aerosolize and spread to other areas.

There are several commercially available kits which simplify the sanitization process, including multi-purpose agents that combine deactivation and decontamination (such as *Peridox RTU)*. Bleach or peroxide can be used for both steps. Bleach can cause corrosion on stainless steel surfaces, including the surfaces of C-PECs. To prevent corrosion, neutralize the bleach by wiping surfaces afterwards with sodium thiosulfate, sterile alcohol, sterile water or a germicidal detergent.

All workers performing these activities must wear appropriate PPE, including two pairs of chemotherapy gloves and a disposable, impermeable gown. Advanced respiratory protection (e.g., fit-tested respirator mask, PAPR) is needed when deactivating, decontaminating and cleaning underneath the work surface of a C-PEC (see previous section on respiratory protection).

WIPE SAMPLING

Pharmacies involved in HD compounding should perform wipe sampling of all compounding surfaces initially and at least every 6 months to ensure that hazardous residue is adequately contained. Areas in the C-PEC, C-SEC and anteroom should be tested for contamination.

HAZARDOUS DRUG SPILLS

HD spills must be cleaned up immediately. All of the compounding staff can be trained to handle HD spills or the facility can have a trained spill response team. There must be a designated person who oversees training and compliance for handling HD spills, and SOPs must be developed to both prevent HD spills and to direct cleanup of HD spills. The Safety Data Sheet (SDS) for the HD should be consulted for guidance on spill clean-up procedures.

ESTABLISH THE WHO, WHAT AND WHEN

- Who refers to the staff who will respond to assist people exposed to the spill and clean up the spill. If HD exposure has occurred, emergency medical help will be needed.
- What refers to the rapid assessment of the situation to determine if additional help will be needed.
- When refers to the need to clean up immediately.

MANAGING THE SPILL

- Spill kits for HDs must be kept in areas where HDs are prepared, stored and administered. The spill kits must be available immediately wherever HDs travel, which is where they can spill.
- Quickly limit access to the area, and post warning signs around the perimeter of the spill. Pregnant people should not be involved with any clean-up activities and should immediately leave the area.
- The warning sign should state ***Caution: Hazardous Spill, Proceed with Care!*** or something similar.

SPILL KIT CONTENTS

- Protective gown, latex gloves (minimally), N95 respirator mask plus goggles with side shields
- HD waste bag, scoop and scraper to get spill waste into the waste bag, chemo pads to absorb hazardous liquid
- HD spill report exposure form for documentation

PROCEDURE FOR CLEANING UP A SPILL

Open the spill kit. The PPE should be donned immediately to protect the staff cleaning up the spill.

- Put ASTM D6978-rated (chemotherapy) gloves on first (these are the type used for HD compounding), then the heavy-duty gloves over top. The heavy-duty gloves protect the hands from broken glass.
- Clean up spilled drug and broken glass.
  - ☐ Never use a brush to clean up broken glass and powder that is contaminated with HDs. Brushes can cause particles to become airborne.
- Cover any liquid with an absorbent spill pad.
- Decontaminate the surfaces on which the HD has spilled, moving from the area of lesser contamination to areas of greater contamination to avoid spreading the hazard.
- If wetted wipes are not available, pour decontamination solution on pads. Do not spray.
- Put trash in a hazardous waste bag and seal. This is bulk hazardous waste, which is discarded in the black waste bin (see Disposal section).

AFTER THE SPILL IS CLEANED

- Doff (remove) garb and perform hand hygiene.
- Decontaminate respirator and replace cartridges.
- Replace the spill kit.

DRUG EXPOSURE

The most urgent action to take when a staff member has an exposure, whether the drug is hazardous or not, is to get the drug or chemical off the person as soon as possible. The first 10 to 15 seconds after exposure are critical. Delaying treatment may cause serious injury.

Protocols for emergency procedures should be kept in the pharmacy. Minimal actions to take include:

1. For an exposure to gloves or gown, immediately remove the garb that has the drug on it.
2. Immediately cleanse any affected skin with soap and water.
3. For an eye exposure, flood the affected eye at an eyewash fountain (see image), or with water or an isotonic eyewash, for at least 15 minutes. Depending on the chemical, the time required for flushing can be longer.

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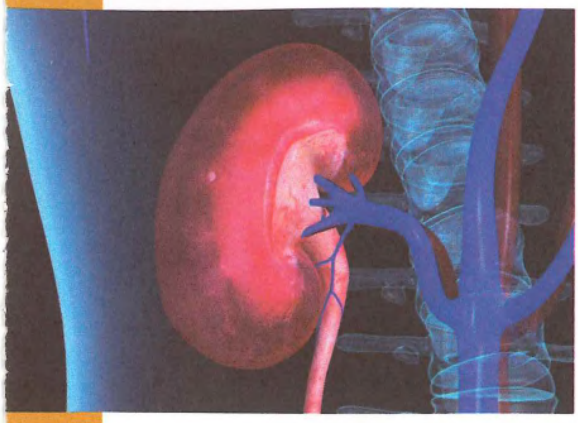
4. Obtain medical attention, when warranted.
5. Document the exposure in the employee's record.

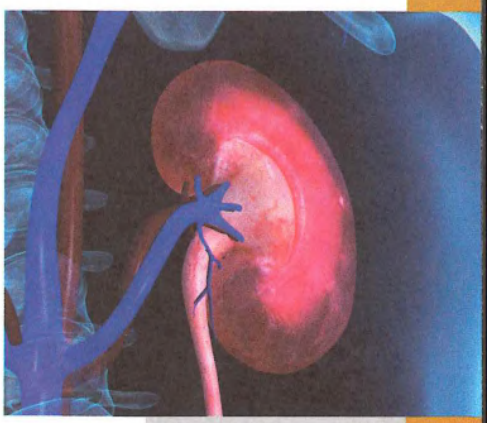
Select Guidelines/References

United States Pharmacopeia (2023). General Chapter 800. Hazardous Drugs - Handling in Healthcare Settings. USP-NF. Rockville, MD: United States Pharmacopeia. DOI: https://doi.org/10.31003/USPNF_M7808_07_01.

Ovesen JL, Sammons D, Connor TH, et al. NIOSH list of hazardous drugs in healthcare settings, 2024. U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, DHHS (NIOSH) Publication Number 2025-103 (Supersedes 2016-161).

RENAL & LIVER DISEASE





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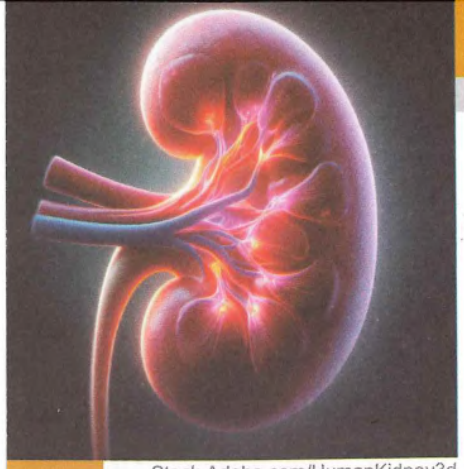

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CHAPTER 18

RENAL DISEASE

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= Study Tip Gal = Key Drugs Guy

BACKGROUND

Approximately 35 million U.S. adults (more than one in seven) have chronic kidney disease (CKD), which is a progressive loss of kidney function over months or years. The risk is highest in African Americans, Hispanic Americans, American Indians and Asians. Common causes include uncontrolled diabetes and hypertension; controlling blood glucose and blood pressure can prevent renal damage and delay progression to end-stage renal disease (ESRD). Less common causes of CKD include polycystic kidney disease, certain infections (e.g., HIV, hepatitis B and C viruses), renal artery stenosis (a narrowed or blocked artery that ↓ blood flow to the kidney) and some drugs.

Patients with or without CKD can experience acute kidney injury (AKI), or a sudden loss of kidney function; AKI is often reversible but can be permanent if the precipitating condition is not corrected. Two common types of AKI are described in the box below.

TYPES OF ACUTE KIDNEY INJURY

Prerenal

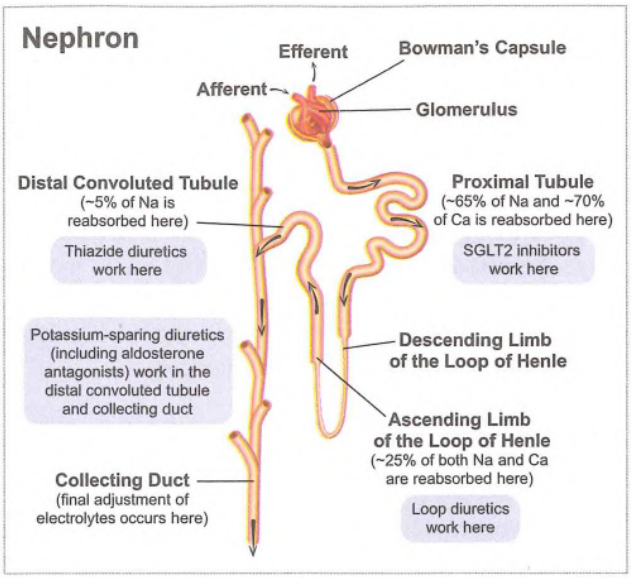
- Caused by decreased renal perfusion due to volume depletion (i.e., dehydration) and/or vascular changes (e.g., severe hypotension).
- Can be drug-induced (e.g., loop diuretics).
- Presents with a BUN:SCr ratio > 20:1, dry skin and mucous membranes, decreased urine output and tachycardia (to maintain cardiac output).

Intrinsic

- Caused by tubular damage (i.e., acute tubular necrosis) or interstitial inflammation (i.e., acute interstitial nephritis).
- Can be drug-induced (e.g., aminoglycosides).
- Presents with a normal BUN:SCr ratio (~10-15:1).

RENAL PHYSIOLOGY

The nephron (see image) is the functional unit of the kidney. Nephrons reabsorb needed substances (e.g., sodium, potassium, bicarbonate, water) back into the blood, and the remainder (called the filtrate) is excreted in the urine as waste. The primary function of the nephron is to regulate blood volume (and in turn, blood pressure) and pH. There are roughly one million nephrons in each kidney; the major parts of the nephron are discussed in the sections that follow.



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GLOMERULUS

The afferent arteriole delivers blood into the glomerulus, a large filtering unit that is located within Bowman's capsule. Substances with a small molecular weight (i.e., < 40,000 daltons), including most drugs, pass through the glomerular capillaries into the filtrate (inside the lumen of the nephron) and are excreted in the urine.

Larger substances (e.g., albumin, protein-bound drugs) are not filtered and stay in the blood (exiting the nephron via the efferent arteriole).

If the glomerulus is damaged, some albumin is inappropriately filtered into the urine. The amount of albumin in the urine (albuminuria) and the glomerular filtration rate (GFR) are used to assess CKD severity (see CKD Criteria later in the chapter).

PROXIMAL TUBULE

The proximal tubule is the first place the filtrate travels after exiting the glomerulus. A high proportion of sodium (Na), chloride (Cl), calcium (Ca) and water that was initially filtered out of the blood is reabsorbed back into the blood here. Blood pH is regulated by exchanging hydrogen and bicarbonate ions. Sodium-glucose cotransporter 2 (SGLT2) inhibitors (e.g., empagliflozin, dapagliflozin) work here to decrease glucose reabsorption (see the Diabetes chapter).

LOOP OF HENLE

As the filtrate moves through the descending limb of the loop of Henle, water is reabsorbed back into the blood, but Na and Cl are not (i.e., their concentration in the filtrate increases). As the filtrate moves through the ascending limb of the loop of Henle, Na and Cl are reabsorbed back into the blood, but water is not, unless antidiuretic hormone (ADH or vasopressin) is present, in which case more water is reabsorbed and less is excreted in the urine (anti-diuresis).

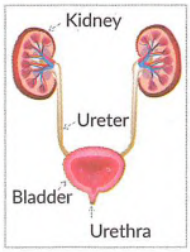
Approximately 25% of filtered Na is reabsorbed in the ascending limb of the loop of Henle. Loop diuretics inhibit the Na-K-2Cl pump in the thick ascending limb, which decreases Na reabsorption back into the blood. This significantly increases the Na concentration in the filtrate, causing less water to be subsequently reabsorbed (more water stays in the filtrate and is excreted in the urine along with Na). Loop diuretics also cause less Ca reabsorption, which can lead to hypocalcemia. Long-term use of loop diuretics can therefore decrease bone density.

DISTAL CONVOLUTED TUBULE

The distal convoluted tubule regulates potassium (K), Na, Ca and pH. Thiazide diuretics inhibit the Na-Cl pump in the distal convoluted tubule; because only ~5% of Na is reabsorbed here, the diuresis caused by thiazide diuretics is less potent than loop diuretics. In addition, thiazide diuretics increase Ca reabsorption in the distal convoluted tubule, making their long-term use protective to bones.

COLLECTING DUCT

The collecting duct is a network of tubules and ducts that connect the nephrons in each kidney to a ureter. The filtrate (which is now urine) passes from the ureters into the bladder and then out of the body via the urethra (see figure).



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The water and electrolyte balance in the collecting duct is affected by ADH and aldosterone levels. Potassium-sparing diuretics, including aldosterone antagonists (e.g., spironolactone, eplerenone), work in the distal convoluted tubule and collecting duct to ↓ Na and water reabsorption and ↑ K reabsorption.

DRUG-INDUCED NEPHROTOXICITY

Select medications that are nephrotoxic (i.e., they cause renal damage) are listed in the Key Drugs Guy below. Drug-induced nephrotoxicity can be acute and reversible if the medication is stopped, or it can be irreversible and progress to CKD. Patients at increased risk include those with ↓ renal blood flow (e.g., due to dehydration, hypotension or heart failure), preexisting kidney disease, advanced age and concomitant use of multiple nephrotoxic medications. Drug-induced nephrotoxicity often occurs in the acute care setting and contributes to morbidity and mortality.

SELECT DRUGS THAT CAUSE NEPHROTOXICITY

Aminoglycosides	NSAIDs
Amphotericin B	Polymyxins
Cisplatin	Radiographic contrast dye**
Cyclosporine	Tacrolimus
Loop diuretics*	Vancomycin

**Associated with acute kidney injury due to excessive volume loss.*
***Sometimes called contrast media or contrast agent; used during imaging tests (e.g., angiography, MRI, CT).*

ESTIMATING KIDNEY FUNCTION

Two common laboratory markers used to estimate kidney function include:

- Blood urea nitrogen (BUN), which measures the amount of nitrogen in the blood that comes from urea, a waste product of protein metabolism. Because urea is excreted by the kidneys, BUN increases as kidney function declines; however, other factors can also increase BUN levels (e.g., dehydration increases BUN reabsorption).
- Serum creatinine (SCr). Creatinine, a waste product of muscle metabolism, is mostly filtered by the glomerulus. Any creatinine that is not filtered is secreted into the nephron tubules. The normal range for SCr is ~0.6 – 1.3 mg/dL. As glomerular function declines, SCr increases (less is filtered); however, this increase may not be reflected immediately on lab reports due to an initial compensatory increase in tubular secretion of SCr.

CREATININE CLEARANCE

The Cockcroft-Gault equation (see Study Tip Gal on following page) for calculating creatinine clearance (CrCl) is most commonly used to estimate kidney function when dosing medications. This is because drug dosing recommendations for most renally-eliminated medications are based on CrCl [a few drugs use glomerular filtration rate (GFR), including SGLT2 inhibitors and metformin].

The accuracy of a calculated CrCl is decreased when a patient has very low muscle mass (e.g., frail, elderly patients) because the resulting low SCr can lead to an overestimation of CrCl and inappropriate drug dosing. Obesity, liver disease, pregnancy, high muscle mass and other conditions associated with abnormal muscle turnover can also affect the estimation of kidney function using measured SCr. The Cockcroft-Gault equation is not preferable for estimating kidney function in very young children or those with ESRD or unstable renal function (e.g., SCr is fluctuating or changing over a short period of time).

GFR AND ALBUMINURIA FOR EVALUATING KIDNEY DISEASE

The Kidney Disease Improving Global Outcomes (KDIGO) guidelines recommend using the cause of CKD, the GFR [or estimated GFR (eGFR)] and one or more markers of kidney damage, typically the degree of albuminuria, to evaluate the severity of renal impairment (see tables below). eGFR is calculated using the Modification of Diet in Renal Disease (MDRD) or Chronic Kidney Disease Epidemiology Collaboration (CKD-EPI) equation; some healthcare facilities may use one of these equations to report an estimation of kidney function in the electronic medical record [e.g., as part of the basic metabolic panel (BMP)].

CKD CRITERIA

The criteria for confirming CKD includes the presence of either of the following for ≥ 3 months:

- eGFR < 60 mL/min/1.73 m^2 (this is less than half the normal value of 125 mL/min/1.73 m^2)
- Albuminuria, based on a urine albumin excretion rate (AER) ≥ 30 mg/24 hours or urine albumin-to-creatinine ratio (UACR) ≥ 30 mg/g.

GFR CATEGORIES

GFR (mL/min/1.73 m^2)	TERMS	GFR CATEGORY	CKD STAGE
≥ 90 + kidney damage*	Normal or high	G1	Stage 1
60-89 + kidney damage*	Mild decrease	G2	Stage 2
45-59	Mild to moderate decrease	G3a	Stage 3
30-44	Moderate to severe decrease	G3b	
15-29	Severe decrease	G4	Stage 4
< 15 or dialysis dependent	Kidney failure	G5	Stage 5

**Example markers of kidney damage include a history of kidney transplant, structural abnormalities on imaging or presence of albuminuria.*

DEGREE OF ALBUMINURIA

ACR (mg/g) or AER (mg/24 hr)	TERMS	ALBUMINURIA CATEGORY
< 30	Normal to mild increase (previously called normoalbuminuria)	A1
30-300	Moderate increase (previously called microalbuminuria)	A2
> 300	Severe increase (previously called macroalbuminuria)	A3

ACR: albumin to creatinine ratio; AER: albumin excretion rate

CrCl vs. GFR

CrCl

- Cockcroft-Gault equation

$$\text{CrCl (mL/min)} = \frac{140 - (\text{patient age})}{72 \times \text{SCr}} \times \text{weight (kg)} \times 0.85 \text{ (if female)}$$

- Use actual body weight if less than IBW, use IBW if normal weight, use adjusted body weight if overweight (by BMI)*
- Medication contraindications and renal dose adjustments are typically based on CrCl

GFR

- Not commonly calculated by pharmacists but may be reported with a basic metabolic panel (BMP)
- Used for assessing and staging kidney disease and for dosing select drugs (e.g., metformin, SGLT2 inhibitors)
- If GFR is not provided on the exam, use CrCl to determine drug contraindications and renal dose adjustments

**See the Calculations IV chapter for more information on weights and CrCl.*

DELAYING PROGRESSION OF CHRONIC KIDNEY DISEASE

The KDIGO guideline recommendations to delay CKD progression are relatively consistent with guideline recommendations for patients with comorbid CKD and hypertension (per the ACC/AHA) and/or diabetes (per the ADA). The treatments discussed below may also be appropriate for patients with albuminuria due to other etiologies.

Key recommendations to delay CKD progression include:

- Target a SBP < 120 mmHg (if tolerated) for those with comorbid hypertension (this is lower than the goal BP < 130/80 mmHg recommended by the ACC/AHA for the general population with hypertension).
- Use an ACE inhibitor or ARB (see Study Tip Gal). Do not use an ACE inhibitor or ARB together.
  - ☐ After starting, the baseline SCr can ↑ up to 30% (this is expected, do not stop treatment). If SCr ↑ by > 30%, discontinue treatment (the patient should be referred to a nephrologist).
  - ☐ BP, SCr and potassium should be monitored 2 – 4 weeks after initiation or a dose increase.
  - ☐ Patients should be counseled to avoid potassium supplements and salt substitutes (with potassium chloride).
  - ☐ Titrate to the maximally-tolerated dose.
- If eGFR ≥ 20 mL/min/1.73 m^2, use an SGLT2 inhibitor (e.g., dapagliflozin, empagliflozin).
- If eGFR ≥ 25 mL/min/1.73 m^2 and potassium levels are normal, add finerenone (a nonsteroidal mineralocorticoid receptor antagonist) to an SGLT2 inhibitor and maximally-tolerated dose of an ACE inhibitor or ARB in patients with persistent albuminuria and type 2 diabetes.

ACE INHIBITORS AND ARBs FOR ALBUMINURIA

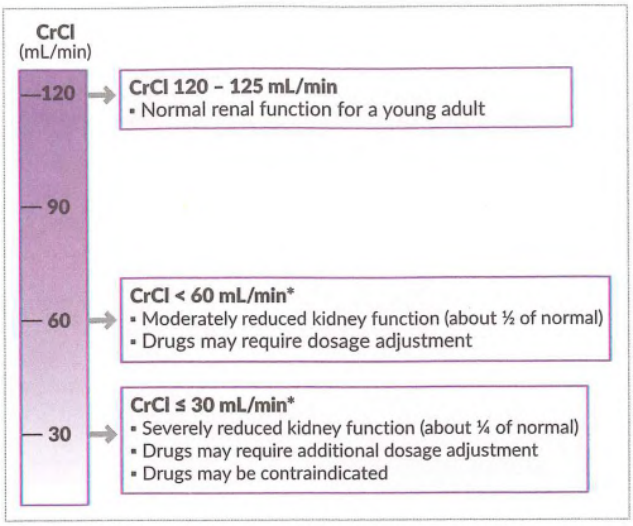
Why?
To delay CKD progression to ESRD

How?
Inhibit renin-angiotensin-aldosterone system (RAAS), specifically the production or activity of angiotensin II (a vasoconstrictor). This results in efferent arteriolar dilation, which reduces pressure in the glomerulus and decreases the filtration of albumin into the urine.

MODIFYING DRUG THERAPY

Medication adjustments may be necessary when CrCl is < 60 mL/min (see image to the right). When CrCl is ≤ 30 mL/min, additional adjustments may be needed or alternate treatment should be considered. Common scenarios related to medications and kidney impairment include:

- The drug is eliminated through the kidneys. To avoid accumulation and toxicity:
  - ☐ The dose may need to be reduced and/or the dosing interval may need to be extended (see Key Drugs Guy below).
  - ☐ The drug may be contraindicated (see Key Drugs Guy to the right)
- The drug can directly cause or worsen kidney disease (it is nephrotoxic).
- The drug becomes less effective as kidney function declines (e.g., thiazide diuretics, nitrofurantoin).
- The drug's side effects may be more significant due to reduced kidney function (e.g., hyperkalemia with aldosterone receptor antagonists).



Check package labeling for individual drug requirements.

SELECT DRUGS THAT REQUIRE ↓ DOSE OR ↑ INTERVAL IN CKD

Anti-Infectives
Aminoglycosides (primarily ↑ dosing interval)

Beta-lactam antibiotics [except antistaphylococcal penicillins (nafcillin, oxacillin) and ceftriaxone]

Fluconazole

NRTIs (except abacavir)

Quinolones (except moxifloxacin)

Vancomycin

Cardiovascular Drugs
Anticoagulants (i.e., enoxaparin, rivaroxaban*, apixaban*, dabigatran*)

Antiarrhythmics (i.e., dofetilide, sotalol, digoxin)

Gastrointestinal Drugs
H2RAs (e.g., famotidine), metoclopramide

Other
Bisphosphonates*

Lithium

PDE-5 inhibitors (e.g., sildenafil, tadalafil)

Medication has indication-specific recommendations.

SELECT DRUGS THAT ARE CONTRAINDICATED IN CKD

CrCl < 60 mL/min
Nitrofurantoin

CrCl < 50 mL/min
Tenofovir disoproxil fumarate-containing HIV treatment combinations (e.g., *Complera, Delstrigo, Stribild**)

Voriconazole IV (due to the vehicle)

CrCl < 30 mL/min
Tenofovir alafenamide-containing HIV treatment combinations (e.g., *Biktarvy, Descovy, Genvoya, Odefsey, Symtuza)*

NSAIDs

Dabigatran**

Potassium-sparing diuretics (e.g., spironolactone, eplerenone)

eGFR < 30 mL/min/1.73 m^2
Metformin***

Other**
Meperidine

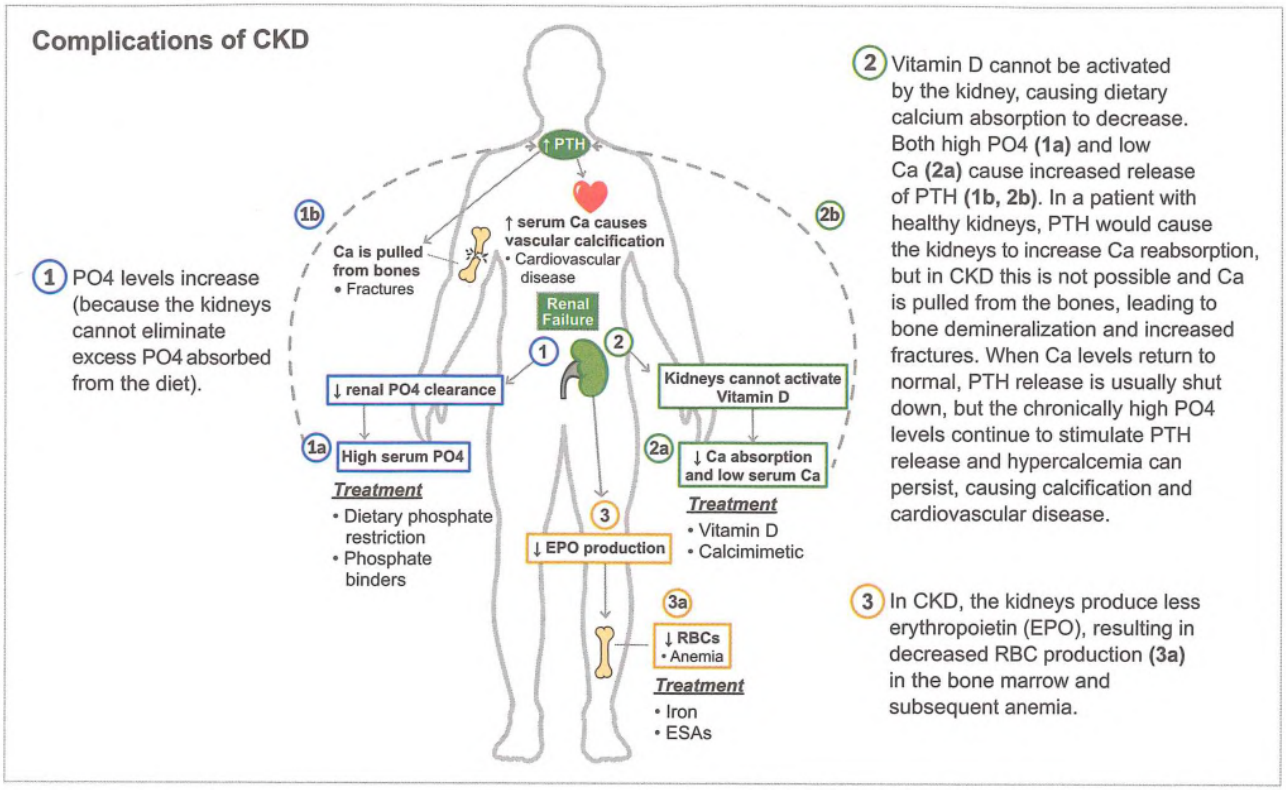
Rivaroxaban**

SGLT2 inhibitors**

For treated patients; do not start if CrCl < 70 mL/min.
Medication has indication-specific recommendations.
For treated patients; do not start if eGFR ≤ 45 mL/min/1.73 m^2.
Not specified or another CrCl cut-off is used.

COMPLICATIONS OF CHRONIC KIDNEY DISEASE

The figure below illustrates the primary complications of CKD that are discussed in the sections that follow.



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CKD MINERAL AND BONE DISORDER

CKD mineral and bone disorder (CKD-MBD) is common in patients with chronic renal impairment and affects almost all patients receiving dialysis. CKD-MBD is associated with fractures, cardiovascular disease and ↑ mortality.

Key monitoring parameters in patients with advanced kidney disease, and those being treated for CKD-MBD, include parathyroid hormone (PTH), phosphorus (phosphate, PO4), Ca and vitamin D levels.

HYPERPHOSPHATEMIA

Hyperphosphatemia contributes to chronically elevated PTH levels (secondary hyperparathyroidism) and must be treated to prevent bone disease and fractures. Treatment is initially focused on restricting dietary phosphate (e.g., avoiding dairy products, cola, chocolate and nuts). As CKD progresses, phosphate binders are often required.

Phosphate binders block the absorption of dietary PO4 by binding it in the intestine. They are taken immediately prior to (or at the start of) each meal (i.e., TID with meals). If a dose is missed (and the food is absorbed), the phosphate binder should be skipped, and the patient should resume normal dosing at the next meal or snack. There are three types of phosphate binders: aluminum-based, calcium-based and aluminum-free, calcium-free.

Tenapanor *(Xphozah)*, a sodium/hydrogen exchanger 3 inhibitor that decreases phosphate transport (and therefore absorption) across the intestinal lumen, may be considered for patients receiving dialysis who have an inadequate response to phosphate binders or cannot tolerate them.

Phosphate Binders

DRUG	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Aluminum-based	
Aluminum hydroxide Suspension	**SIDE EFFECTS** Aluminum intoxication [can cause acute CNS effects (e.g., confusion, seizures) and bone toxicity (e.g., osteomalacia)], constipation, nausea **NOTES** Treatment duration limited to 4 weeks
Calcium-based	
Calcium acetate *(Calphron)* Tablet, capsule, solution Calcium carbonate *(Tums*, others) Tablet, chewable tablet	**SIDE EFFECTS** Hypercalcemia, constipation, nausea **NOTES** Calcium acetate binds dietary phosphorus more effectively than calcium carbonate Hypercalcemia is more likely with concomitant use of vitamin D (due to increased calcium absorption)
Aluminum-free, calcium-free: no aluminum accumulation, less hypercalcemia, but more expensive than calcium-based products	
Sucroferric oxyhydroxide *(Velphoro)* Chewable tablet Ferric citrate *(Auryxia)* Tablet	**WARNINGS** Iron absorption (and toxicity) can occur with ferric citrate (monitor iron/ferritin/TSAT); a dose reduction of IV iron may be necessary; store out of reach of children to prevent accidental overdose **SIDE EFFECTS** Diarrhea, discolored (black) feces, constipation (ferric citrate)
Lanthanum carbonate *(Fosrenol)* Chewable tablet, powder	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** GI obstruction, fecal impaction, ileus **WARNINGS** GI perforation **SIDE EFFECTS** Nausea/vomiting, diarrhea, constipation, abdominal pain **NOTES** Must chew tablet thoroughly to reduce risk of severe GI adverse effects
Sevelamer carbonate ***(Renvela)*** Tablet, powder **Sevelamer hydrochloride** ***(Renagel)*** Tablet	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Bowel obstruction **WARNINGS** Can reduce dietary absorption of vitamins D, E, K and folic acid; consider vitamin supplementation Tablets can cause dysphagia and get stuck in the esophagus; consider using powder if patient has swallowing difficulty **SIDE EFFECTS** Nausea/vomiting/diarrhea (all ~20%), dyspepsia, constipation, abdominal pain, flatulence, metabolic acidosis *(Renagel)* **NOTES** Can lower total cholesterol and LDL by 15-30%; sevelamer carbonate can maintain bicarbonate concentrations

Phosphate Binder Drug Interactions

- Phosphate binders are designed to "bind," and some contain polyvalent cations (e.g., calcium, iron, aluminum) that can interact with other drugs via chelation. Separate administration of phosphate binders from levothyroxine, quinolones and tetracyclines.

VITAMIN D DEFICIENCY & SECONDARY HYPERPARATHYROIDISM

Vitamin D deficiency occurs when the kidney is unable to hydroxylate vitamin D to its final active form, 1,25-dihydroxy vitamin D. Vitamin D deficiency worsens bone disease (by contributing to hypocalcemia and subsequent elevations in PTH), impairs immunity and increases the risk of cardiovascular disease.

Vitamin D has two primary forms: vitamin D3 (cholecalciferol), which is synthesized in the skin after exposure to ultraviolet light (e.g., the sun), and vitamin D2 (ergocalciferol), which is produced from plant sterols and is the primary dietary source of vitamin D. Supplementation with oral ergocalciferol or cholecalciferol may be sufficient in patients with early CKD (e.g., stages 3 and 4).

The vitamin D analogs should be reserved for patients with more severe CKD (e.g., stages 4 and 5) and progressive hyperparathyroidism. Vitamin D analogs can ↑ calcium absorption from the gut, ↑ serum calcium concentrations and inhibit PTH secretion. Typically, the intravenous formulations are used only in patients receiving dialysis.

PTH release can also be inhibited by cinacalcet, a calcimimetic that increases the sensitivity of the calcium receptor on the parathyroid gland, leading to reductions in PTH. Calcimimetics are only used in dialysis patients.

Vitamin D Analogs and Calcimimetics

DRUG	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Vitamin D analogs	
Calcitriol *(Rocaltrol)* Capsule, solution, injection	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Hypercalcemia, vitamin D toxicity **WARNINGS** Hypercalcemia (more likely with calcitriol than doxercalciferol and paricalcitol) **SIDE EFFECTS** Hyperphosphatemia, N/V/D **NOTES** Calcitriol is the active form of vitamin D3 Take with food or shortly after a meal to ↓ GI upset (calcitriol) Calcifediol is a prodrug of calcitriol
Calcifediol *(Rayaldee)* ER capsule	
Doxercalciferol *(Hectorol)* Capsule, injection	
Paricalcitol *(Zemplar)* Capsule, injection	
Calcimimetics	
Cinacalcet *(Sensipar)* Tablet	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Hypocalcemia **WARNINGS** Hypocalcemia (use caution in patients with a seizure history and/or QT prolongation), GI bleeding, decreased bone turnover **SIDE EFFECTS** N/V/D, HA, anorexia, constipation, weakness, myalgia, URTIs
Etelcalcetide *(Parsabiv)* Injection	**WARNINGS** Hypocalcemia, worsening HF, GI bleeding, decreased bone turnover **SIDE EFFECTS** Muscle spasms, paresthesia, N/V/D

ANEMIA OF CKD

Anemia is a decrease in hemoglobin (Hgb) and red blood cells (RBCs). It is common in CKD due to a combination of factors. The primary problem is a lack of erythropoietin (EPO), which is normally produced by the kidneys and travels to the bone marrow to stimulate RBC production. As kidney function declines, EPO production decreases. This leads to fewer RBCs (which contain Hgb to transport oxygen) being released from the bone marrow into the blood, resulting in symptoms of anemia (e.g., fatigue, pale skin).

Erythropoiesis-stimulating agents (ESAs), which work like EPO to stimulate RBC production, can limit the need for blood transfusions. ESAs include epoetin alfa and the longer-acting formulation darbepoetin alfa. ESAs have risks, including hypertension and potentially fatal thromboembolic events (e.g., DVT/PE, MI, stroke) with higher Hgb levels (a boxed warning). They should only be initiated when Hgb is < 10 g/dL, and the dose should be decreased or discontinued if Hgb exceeds 11 g/dL.

ESAs are only effective if adequate iron is available to make Hgb. It is important to assess an iron panel (iron, ferritin and TSAT) and provide supplementation to prevent iron deficiency. Intravenous (IV) iron can be given at the dialysis center.

Vadadustat *(Vafseo)* is an oral drug that increases endogenous erythropoietin levels. It is indicated for CKD patients with anemia who have been receiving dialysis for at least 3 months and has similar boxed warnings and target Hgb levels as parenteral ESAs.

See the Anemia chapter for more information on identifying different types of anemia and the use of ESAs and IV iron.

HYPERKALEMIA

Potassium is the most abundant intracellular cation and is essential for life. Humans obtain potassium through the diet from many foods (e.g., meats, beans, fruits). Normal daily intake through the GI tract is about 1 mEq/kg/day. High dietary intake of potassium in patients with normal kidney function does not typically cause hyperkalemia; the acute rise in potassium from a meal is offset by the release of insulin, which shifts potassium into cells.

Excess potassium is excreted primarily via the kidneys and partially via the gut. Renal potassium excretion is increased by the hormone aldosterone, diuretics (loops > thiazides), a high urine flow (via osmotic diuresis) and by negatively charged ions in the distal tubule (e.g., bicarbonate).

A normal potassium level is 3.5 – 5 mEq/L. Hyperkalemia can be defined as potassium > 5.3 or > 5.5 mEq/L (ranges vary), though clinicians will be concerned with any level > 5 mEq/L. A common cause is decreased renal excretion due to kidney failure. The risk is increased by use of drugs that can raise potassium (see Key Drugs Guy below).

SELECT DRUGS THAT RAISE POTASSIUM LEVELS

- Canagliflozin
- Calcineurin inhibitors (cyclosporine, tacrolimus)
- Drospirenone-containing oral contraceptives
- Potassium-containing IV fluids (including parenteral nutrition)
- Potassium-sparing diuretics (e.g., triamterene, spironolactone)
- Potassium supplements
- Renin-angiotensin-aldosterone system inhibitors (ACE inhibitors, aliskiren, ARBs)
- Sulfamethoxazole/trimethoprim

Patients with diabetes are at a higher risk for hyperkalemia because insulin deficiency reduces the ability to shift potassium into cells. In addition, many patients with diabetes take an ACE inhibitor or ARB.

A patient with an ↑ potassium level may be asymptomatic. When symptoms are present, they can include muscle weakness, bradycardia and fatal arrhythmias. If the potassium is high and/or the heart rate/rhythm is abnormal, the patient is usually monitored with an ECG. The risk for severe, negative outcomes increases as the potassium level increases.

TREATMENT OF HYPERKALEMIA

All potassium sources must be discontinued. If hyperkalemia is severe, there is an urgent clinical need to stabilize the myocardial cells [this is done first if ECG abnormalities (e.g., peaked T waves) are present or an ECG is not available], rapidly shift potassium intracellularly and induce elimination from the body.

The Study Tip Gal below lists the medication options for management of hyperkalemia. Several medications work quickly to move potassium from the extracellular to the intracellular compartment, but they do not lower total body potassium. Other medications enhance potassium elimination from the body but take longer to work (with the exception of loop diuretics). One or more of these methods may be used simultaneously depending on the severity of hyperkalemia.

STEPS FOR TREATING SEVERE HYPERKALEMIA

MECHANISM	INTERVENTION	ROUTE OF ADMINISTRATION	ONSET	NOTES
Stabilize the heart Prevent arrhythmias	Calcium gluconate (preferred) Calcium chloride	IV	1-2 minutes	Does not decrease potassium. Stabilizes myocardial cells to prevent arrhythmias.
Move it Shift K intracellularly	Regular insulin + Dextrose	IV	30 minutes	Insulin and dextrose are co-administered to prevent hypoglycemia. Give insulin alone if blood glucose is ≥ 250 mg/dL.
	Sodium bicarbonate	IV		Used when metabolic acidosis is present.
	Albuterol	Nebulized		Monitor for tachycardia and chest pain.
Remove it Eliminate K from the body	Loop diuretics	IV	15 minutes	Eliminates K in the urine. Monitor volume status.
	Sodium polystyrene sulfonate	Oral or rectal	2-24 hours	Binds K in the GI tract. Due to adverse effects (GI necrosis), used for emergency situations only. Rectal formulation has a faster onset than the oral formulation (but is less effective)
	Patiromer	Oral	~7 hours	Binds K in the GI tract. Delayed onset limits use in life-threatening emergencies.
	Sodium zirconium cyclosilicate	Oral	1 hour	Binds K in the GI tract. Potassium binder with fastest onset of action; may be preferred for emergency situations.
	Hemodialysis		Immediate, once started	Removes K from the blood. It takes several hours to set up and complete dialysis. Other methods are generally used in conjunction.

POTASSIUM BINDERS (NON-ABSORBED CATION EXCHANGE RESINS)

DRUG	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Sodium polystyrene sulfonate *(SPS, Kionex)* Powder, oral suspension, rectal suspension	**WARNINGS** Electrolyte disturbances (hypernatremia, hypokalemia, hypocalcemia, hypomagnesemia), fecal impaction, GI necrosis (limit use to life-threatening hyperkalemia when other treatments to eliminate potassium have failed or are unavailable) **SIDE EFFECTS** N/V, constipation or diarrhea **MONITORING** K, Mg, Na, Ca **NOTES** Can bind other oral medications (check for drug interactions and separate administration)
Patiromer *(Veltassa)* Powder for oral suspension	**WARNINGS** Can worsen GI motility, hypomagnesemia **SIDE EFFECTS** Constipation, nausea, diarrhea **MONITORING** K, Mg **NOTES** Binds to many oral drugs; separate administration by at least 3 hours
Sodium zirconium cyclosilicate *(Lokelma)* Powder for oral suspension	**WARNINGS** Can worsen GI motility, edema, contains sodium (may need to adjust dietary sodium intake) **SIDE EFFECTS** Peripheral edema **NOTES** Can bind other drugs; separate administration by at least 2 hours

METABOLIC ACIDOSIS

The ability of the kidney to reabsorb bicarbonate decreases as CKD progresses. The enhanced elimination of bicarbonate can result in metabolic acidosis. In the ambulatory care setting, treatment of metabolic acidosis is initiated when the serum bicarbonate concentration is < 22 mEq/L. Drugs to replace bicarbonate include:

- Sodium bicarbonate
  - ☐ Sodium load can cause fluid retention.
  - ☐ Monitor sodium level and use caution in patients with hypertension or cardiovascular disease.
- Sodium citrate/citric acid solution *(Cytra-2, Oracit)*
  - ☐ Monitor sodium level.
  - ☐ Metabolized to bicarbonate by the liver; may not be effective in patients with liver failure.

DIALYSIS

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If CKD progresses to failure (stage 5 disease), dialysis is required in patients who do not receive a kidney transplant. The two primary types of dialysis are hemodialysis (HD) and peritoneal dialysis (PD). In HD, the patient's blood is pumped to the dialyzer (dialysis machine) and runs through a semipermeable dialysis filter, which uses a concentration gradient to remove waste products, electrolytes and excess fluid. HD is a 3 – 4 hour process, several times per week (usually three times). Patients who receive home HD can be dialyzed more frequently (e.g., 5 – 6 times per week).

In PD, a dialysis solution (usually containing glucose) is pumped into the peritoneal cavity (the abdominal cavity surrounding the internal organs). The peritoneal membrane acts as the semipermeable membrane (i.e., as the dialyzer). The solution is left in the abdomen to "dwell" for a period of time to allow for waste product and electrolyte exchange, then is drained. This cycle is repeated throughout the day, every day. PD is performed by the patient at home.

FACTORS AFFECTING DRUG REMOVAL DURING DIALYSIS

When a patient receives dialysis, the pharmacist must consider the amount of medication cleared during dialysis in order to recommend the correct dose and interval. Medications that are removed during dialysis (including many antibiotics) must be given after dialysis or may require a supplemental dose following dialysis. Drug removal during dialysis depends primarily on the following factors.

FACTOR	EFFECT
Drug Characteristic	
Molecular weight/size	Smaller molecules are more readily removed by dialysis
Volume of distribution	Drugs with a large Vd are less likely to be removed by dialysis
Protein-binding	Highly protein-bound drugs are less likely to be removed by dialysis
Dialysis Factors	
Membrane	High-flux (large pore size) and high-efficiency (large surface area) HD filters remove more substances than conventional/low-flux filters
Blood flow rate	Higher dialysis blood flow rates increase drug removal over a given time interval

Select Guidelines/References

Kidney Disease: Improving Global Outcomes (KDIGO) CKD Work Group. KDIGO 2024 Clinical Practice Guideline for the Evaluation and Management of Chronic Kidney Disease. *Kidney Int.* 2024;105(Suppl 45);S117-S314.

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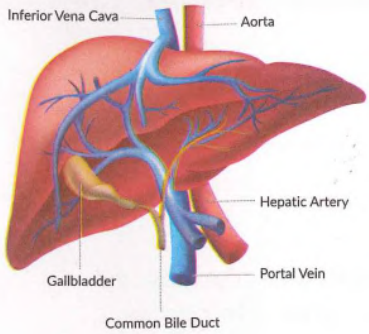

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CHAPTER 19

HEPATITIS & LIVER DISEASE

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= Study Tip Gal = Key Drugs Guy

HEPATITIS

BACKGROUND

Hepatitis (i.e., inflammation of the liver) can be caused by alcohol, certain drugs, autoimmune diseases and viruses/infections (e.g., hepatitis viruses, herpes viruses, cytomegalovirus, Epstein-Barr virus, adenoviruses). The most common cause is hepatitis A, B, or C virus.

HEPATITIS A, B AND C

The Study Tip Gal below compares hepatitis A, B and C viruses. Hepatitis A virus (HAV) often causes an acute, self-limiting illness with mild, non-specific symptoms that can be managed with supportive care.

Hepatitis B virus (HBV) and hepatitis C virus (HCV) can cause acute and chronic infection, which can lead to cirrhosis, liver cancer, liver failure and death if left untreated. HBV and HCV may be asymptomatic or they can present with signs and symptoms (e.g., increased ALT/AST, dark urine, jaundice, right upper quadrant abdominal pain).

COMPARISON OF HEPATITIS VIRUSES

	HEPATITIS A	HEPATITIS B	HEPATITIS C
Acute vs. Chronic	Acute only	Both	Both
Transmission	Fecal-oral route	Body fluids (e.g., blood, semen, vaginal fluid)	Blood
Risk Factors	■ Ingesting contaminated food/water ■ Close person-to-person contact* ■ Travel to an endemic area	■ Injection drug use and other percutaneous exposures (e.g., tattoos, piercings, needlestick injuries) ■ Sexual exposure (e.g., unprotected sex with an infected person, sex with multiple partners, men who have sex with men) ■ Perinatal (mother-to-child) transmission	
Vaccine	Yes**	Yes**	No

**Can be facilitated by improper handwashing and includes sexual transmission, injection drug use, and transmission within households, daycare centers, residential institutions, military barracks, or among houseless individuals.*
***See Immunizations chapter.*

A one-time screening for HBV and HCV is recommended for anyone age ≥ 18 years, and periodic, repeat screening is recommended for those with enhanced risk. Pregnant women should be screened for HBV and HCV with each pregnancy.

Recommended screening tests include:

- HCV antibody test and, if positive, HCV RNA viral load.
- HBV triple panel test:
  - ☐ Hepatitis B surface antigen (HBsAg), which is positive during acute or chronic infection.
  - ☐ Hepatitis B surface antibody (anti-HBs), which is positive in patients with immunity (due to vaccination or prior infection).
  - ☐ Total hepatitis B core antibody (anti-HBc), which is positive in patients with previous or ongoing infection.

DRUG TREATMENT FOR HEPATITIS C

There are six HCV genotypes (1 – 6) and various subtypes (e.g., 1a, 1b). Treatment is recommended for all patients with acute or chronic HCV. Treatment options and duration depend on the genotype, the presence or absence of cirrhosis, and whether the patient has been treated previously.

Preferred treatment for HCV consists of 2 – 3 direct-acting antivirals (DAAs) with different mechanisms (see Study Tip Gal), usually for 8 – 12 weeks. A combination of ribavirin plus DAA therapy is an alternative treatment option that is usually reserved for patients with cirrhosis or those who do not achieve virologic cure with initial treatment.

DIRECT-ACTING ANTIVIRALS (DAAs)

DAA therapy for HCV can result in a virologic cure, or sustained virologic response (SVR), as evidenced by an undetectable HCV RNA viral load after treatment completion. To facilitate cure, any barriers to treatment adherence should be addressed prior to DAA therapy.

The recommended first-line DAA regimens for treatment-naïve patients with HCV but without cirrhosis (or with compensated cirrhosis) include:

- Glecaprevir/pibrentasvir *(Mavyret)* for 8 weeks
- Sofosbuvir/velpatasvir *(Epclusa)* for 12 weeks

These regimens treat all HCV genotypes. Other DAA regimens are indicated only for specific genotypes.

DAA MECHANISMS AND REGIMENS

Preferred HCV regimens include 2-3 DAAs with different mechanisms of action (often in one tablet)

MECHANISM	NAME CLUE	EXAMPLES
NS3/4A protease inhibitors	–previr P for PI	Glec*aprevir* Grazo*previr* Voxila*previr*
NS5A replication complex inhibitors	–asvir A for NS5A	Elb*asvir* Ledip*asvir* Pibrent*asvir* Velpat*asvir*
NS5B polymerase inhibitors	–buvir B for NS5B	Sofos*buvir*

Be able to recognize appropriate and inappropriate combinations.

Examples:

Velpat*asvir* + sofos*buvir:* preferred regimen combining two different MOAs.

Elb*asvir* + ledip*asvir:* two DAAs with the same MOA that should not be used together.

DRUG	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
All DAAs	**BOXED WARNING** Risk of reactivating HBV; test all patients for HBV before starting DAA therapy **WARNINGS** Potentially serious drug interactions (see DAA Drug Interactions) **SIDE EFFECTS** Well-tolerated; HA, fatigue, diarrhea, nausea **MONITORING** LFTs (including bilirubin), HCV RNA viral load
Glecaprevir/pibrentasvir *(Mavyret)* **Sofosbuvir/velpatasvir *(Epclusa)*** Sofosbuvir/ledipasvir *(Harvoni)* Sofosbuvir/velpatasvir/voxilaprevir *(Vosevi)* Sofosbuvir *(Sovaldi)* Elbasvir/grazoprevir *(Zepatier)*	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** *Mavyret, Zepatier:* moderate-severe hepatic impairment (Child-Pugh class B or C); history of hepatic decompensation **WARNINGS** Sofosbuvir-containing regimens: do not use amiodarone with sofosbuvir as serious symptomatic bradycardia has been reported **NOTES** Single-agent sofosbuvir should not be used alone Dispense in original container to protect from moisture (and maintain antiviral efficacy) Ledipasvir- and velpatasvir-containing regimens: acid-suppressive drugs can decrease absorption and efficacy (see DAA Drug Interactions) Most DAAs can be taken with or without food; *Mavyret* and Vosevi are taken with food

DAA DRUG INTERACTIONS

DAAs have significant drug interaction potential. Consult the package labeling of each drug for complete details.

ALL DAAs

- Avoid strong CYP3A4 inducers (e.g., phenytoin, phenobarbital, rifampin, rifabutin, carbamazepine, oxcarbazepine, St. John's wort).
- DAAs can ↑ the concentration (and myopathy risk) of select statins.
- Glucose metabolism can improve as HCV viral load decreases. Concurrent use of DAAs with insulin and other diabetes medications can cause hypoglycemia. Monitor BG and ↓ diabetes medication doses as needed.

MAVYRET

- Do not use with select statins (atorvastatin, lovastatin, simvastatin), select protease inhibitors (atazanavir, darunavir, lopinavir, ritonavir), cyclosporine (> 100 mg per day) or ethinyl estradiol (> 20 mcg per day).

EPCLUSA, HARVONI AND *VOSEVI*

- Contains sofosbuvir: do not use with amiodarone due to the risk of bradycardia.
- Antacids, H2RAs and PPIs can ↓ concentrations of ledipasvir and velpatasvir.
  - ☐ Separate from antacids by 4 hours.
  - ☐ Take H2RAs at the same time or separated (~12 hours) and use famotidine ≤ 40 mg BID or equivalent.
  - ☐ Avoid concurrent use of PPIs.

ZEPATIER

- Do not use with efavirenz, cyclosporine or select protease inhibitors (atazanavir, darunavir, lopinavir, tipranavir).

RIBAVIRIN

Ribavirin (RBV) is an oral antiviral drug that inhibits replication of RNA and DNA viruses. It can be used for HCV in combination with a DAA regimen, but never as monotherapy.

DRUG	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Ribavirin Capsule, tablet *Virazole* inhalation solution – for RSV	**BOXED WARNINGS** Significant teratogenic effects (see Notes) Monotherapy not effective for HCV Hemolytic anemia (mostly occurs within 1-2 wks of initiation – can worsen cardiac disease and lead to MI; do not use in patients with significant or unstable cardiac disease) **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Avoid in pregnant females and male partners of a pregnant female, hemoglobinopathies **SIDE EFFECTS** Fatigue, HA, insomnia, anxiety/mood changes, N/V/D, anorexia, myalgia, hypothyroidism, alopecia **MONITORING** CBC with differential, electrolytes, LFTs, HCV RNA viral load, TSH, pregnancy tests (at baseline and periodically during treatment and the post-treatment follow-up period) **NOTES** Avoid pregnancy (including in female partners of male-treated patients); use at least 2 forms of effective contraception during treatment and for 6-9 months after treatment completion

DRUG TREATMENT FOR HEPATITIS B

Not all patients with HBV require drug treatment; the decision to initiate treatment is guided by multiple factors, including the presence of chronic liver damage (e.g., compensated vs. decompensated cirrhosis), HBV DNA viral load, and AST/ALT levels. First-line treatment includes monotherapy with a recommended nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitor (NRTI); an alternative option, pegylated interferon alfa-2a, may be used in some patients. The choice of treatment can depend on potential drug adverse effects and duration of treatment, as described in the sections that follow.

NUCLEOSIDE REVERSE TRANSCRIPTASE INHIBITORS (NRTIs)

NRTIs prevent HBV replication by inhibiting HBV polymerase, which results in DNA chain termination. Entecavir, tenofovir disoproxil fumarate (TDF) and tenofovir alafenamide (TAF) are recommended as monotherapy for HBV treatment because they have a high barrier to resistance; NRTIs with a low barrier to resistance (e.g., lamivudine, adefovir) are no longer recommended. The NRTI duration of treatment for HBV can be several years or, in many cases, indefinite.

Prior to starting an NRTI for HBV, all patients should be tested for HIV. TDF and TAF (but not entecavir) have activity against HIV; if a patient is co-infected, an antiretroviral regimen containing two NRTIs approved for the treatment of HIV (with one also recommended first line for HBV) is preferred to minimize the risk of resistance.

DRUG	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
All NRTIs	**BOXED WARNINGS** Exacerbations of HBV can occur upon discontinuation Lactic acidosis and severe hepatomegaly with steatosis, which can be fatal (downgraded to a warning for both tenofovir formulations) Can cause HIV resistance in HBV patients with unrecognized or untreated HIV infection (downgraded to a warning for both tenofovir formulations) **NOTES** Entecavir and TDF: renal dose adjustment required if CrCl < 50 mL/min TAF: not recommended if CrCl < 15 mL/min
Tenofovir disoproxil fumarate, TDF *(Viread)* Tablet, oral powder Also indicated for HIV **Tenofovir alafenamide,** TAF *(Vemlidy)* Tablet	**WARNINGS** ↑ risk with TDF vs. TAF: renal toxicity (including acute renal failure and/or Fanconi syndrome), ↓ bone mineral density **SIDE EFFECTS** Nausea, diarrhea, HA, abdominal pain, fatigue, depression, ↑ LFTs Lipid abnormalities (↑ risk with TAF) **NOTES** *Viread* and *Vemlidy:* protect from moisture; dispense only in original container Single-agent TAF (i.e., *Vemlidy)* is approved for treating HBV only; see HIV chapter for TAF-containing combination products used for HIV
Entecavir *(Baraclude)* Tablet, oral solution	**SIDE EFFECTS** ↑ LFTs, hematuria, hyperglycemia, glycosuria **NOTES** Food reduces AUC by 18-20%; take on an empty stomach (2 hours before or after a meal)

INTERFERON ALFA

Interferons are naturally-produced cytokines that have antiviral, antiproliferative and immunomodulatory effects. The pegylated form of interferon alfa (peginterferon alfa-2A) is approved as monotherapy for the treatment of chronic HBV (interferon beta formulations used for multiple sclerosis are discussed in the Systemic Steroids & Autoimmune Conditions chapter). Although interferons have toxicities that limit their use (see table below), they may be preferred in some patients (instead of NRTIs) because they have a finite treatment course (48 weeks).

DRUG	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Pegylated interferon alfa-2a *(Pegasys)* SC injection	**BOXED WARNINGS** Can cause or exacerbate neuropsychiatric, autoimmune, ischemic or infectious disorders **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Autoimmune hepatitis, decompensated liver disease in cirrhotic patients, infants/neonates **WARNINGS** Myelosuppression, CV events, visual disorders (retinopathy, decrease in vision), endocrine disorders (hypo/hyperthyroidism, hypo/hyperglycemia), hypersensitivity reactions **SIDE EFFECTS** CNS effects (fatigue, depression, anxiety), GI upset, ↑ LFTs (5-10 × ULN), alopecia Flu-like syndrome (fever, chills, HA, malaise); pretreat with acetaminophen and an antihistamine **MONITORING** CBC with differential, LFTs, uric acid, SCr, electrolytes, TGs, thyroid function tests, HBV DNA

LIVER DISEASE AND CIRRHOSIS

BACKGROUND

Cirrhosis is advanced fibrosis (scarring) of the liver that is usually irreversible and can be categorized as compensated (some residual liver function) or decompensated (no liver function). The most common causes are hepatitis C virus and alcohol consumption. The scar tissue impairs liver blood flow, leading to numerous complications, including portal hypertension, gastroesophageal varices, ascites and hepatic encephalopathy.

CLINICAL PRESENTATION

Symptoms of liver disease include non-specific findings (e.g., nausea, vomiting, poor appetite, malaise) accompanied by any of the following: right upper quadrant abdominal pain, yellowed skin and whites of the eyes (jaundice), abdominal fluid buildup (ascites) or altered mental status (encephalopathy). Stool can become lighter (white or clay-colored) due to decreased bile production or a blocked bile duct.

ASSESSING LIVER DISEASE

Cirrhosis is definitively diagnosed with a liver biopsy, but certain lab results can be used to identify liver damage (see Study Tip Gal). Liver function tests (LFTs) typically include a panel of enzymes and other markers of hepatic injury or inflammation. In general, higher values indicate more active (acute) liver disease. Albumin and PT/INR are markers of synthetic liver function (i.e., production ability of proteins, including coagulation factors).

SCORING SYSTEMS

The severity and prognosis of liver disease can be predicted using the model for end-stage liver disease (MELD), which has scores ranging from 6 – 40 (high scores indicate poorer prognosis), and the Child-Turcotte-Pugh (CTP), or Child-Pugh, classification system.

LAB ABNORMALITIES IN LIVER DISEASE

Liver Function Tests (LFTs)

- ↑ Aspartate aminotransferase (AST)
- ↑ Alanine aminotransferase (ALT)
- ↑ Alkaline phosphatase (Alk Phos, or ALP)
- ↑ Total bilirubin (Tbili)

Indicators of Impaired Liver Function

- ↓ Albumin
- ↑ Prothrombin time (PT) and INR

Other

- ↑ Ammonia (see Hepatic Encephalopathy section)

The Child-Pugh uses clinical and objective findings of liver dysfunction (see table below) to calculate a total score that classifies the patient's disease severity as either class A (score < 7; mild disease), class B (score 7 – 9; moderate disease) or class C (score 10 – 15; severe disease). Although information to guide drug dosing of hepatically cleared drugs is limited, the Child-Pugh is most often used; in general, hepatically-cleared drugs should be used with caution in patients with severe liver disease (Child-Pugh class C).

PARAMETER	1 POINT	2 POINTS	3 POINTS
Total bilirubin (mg/dL)	< 2	2-3	> 3
Albumin (g/dL)	> 3.5	2.8-3.5	< 2.8
INR	< 1.7	1.7-2.3	> 2.3
Ascites	Absent	Slight	Moderate
Encephalopathy	None	Grade 1-2	Grade 3-4

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- ↑ Alkaline phosphatase (Alk Phos, or ALP)
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Indicators of Impaired Liver Function

- ↓ Albumin
- ↑ Prothrombin time (PT) and INR

Other

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Albumin (g/dL)	> 3.5	2.8-3.5	< 2.8
INR	< 1.7	1.7-2.3	> 2.3
Ascites	Absent	Slight	Moderate
Encephalopathy	None	Grade 1-2	Grade 3-4

NATURAL PRODUCTS

Milk thistle is sometimes used by patients with liver disease. Milk thistle does not appear to be harmful, but there is limited data to demonstrate efficacy. Kava, a relaxant used for anxiety and insomnia, is a known hepatotoxin.

DRUG-INDUCED LIVER INJURY

Many drugs can cause liver damage (see Key Drugs Guy). The primary treatment (in most cases) is to stop the offending drug. Hepatotoxic drugs are typically discontinued when LFTs are > 3 times the upper limit of normal, but clinical judgment is warranted.

Acetaminophen is a known hepatotoxic drug and can cause severe injury if not dosed appropriately (see the Pain and Toxicology & Antidotes chapters for details). Acetaminophen can be used in patients with cirrhosis for short durations and at lower dosages (e.g., < 2 grams/day). NSAIDs should be avoided in patients with liver disease because their use can lead to decompensation, including bleeding.

SELECT DRUGS WITH A BOXED WARNING FOR LIVER DAMAGE

KEY DRUGS

- Acetaminophen
- Amiodarone
- Bosentan
- Isoniazid
- Ketoconazole
- Leflunomide/teriflunomide
- Methotrexate
- Nefazodone
- Nevirapine
- Propylthiouracil
- Valproic acid
- Zidovudine

Others:

- Felbamate
- Flutamide
- Lomitapide
- Maraviroc
- Tipranavir
- Tolcapone

ALCOHOL-ASSOCIATED LIVER DISEASE

The risk of alcohol-associated liver disease (ALD) increases with the duration and amount of alcohol consumed, and women have a higher risk than men. Chronic alcohol ingestion causes "steatosis" (fatty liver) due to fat deposition in hepatocytes. This can be reversible and self-limiting (if drinking is stopped) or progress to alcoholic hepatitis, fatty liver (steatohepatitis) or chronic hepatitis with hepatic fibrosis or cirrhosis.

TREATMENT

The most important part of treatment is alcohol cessation, because abstinence is essential to improve outcomes. In addition to psychosocial interventions (e.g., rehabilitation programs, support groups), some patients may benefit from drug treatment to prevent relapse (e.g., naltrexone, acamprosate, disulfiram).

Alcohol cessation can cause withdrawal symptoms. Severe alcohol withdrawal symptoms (e.g., seizures, delirium tremens, hallucinations) are primarily treated with benzodiazepines and require close monitoring in a healthcare setting. Mild withdrawal symptoms (e.g., diaphoresis, restlessness, loss of appetite) can be managed in the outpatient setting with gabapentin or carbamazepine.

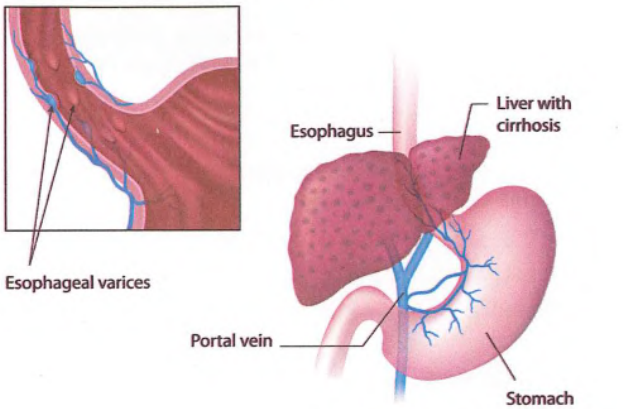
Proper nutrition is essential to help the liver recover. Vitamins and trace minerals, including vitamin A, vitamin D, thiamine (vitamin B1), folate, pyridoxine (vitamin B6) and zinc can help reverse malnutrition. Thiamine is used to prevent and treat Wernicke encephalopathy, an acute neurological condition caused by thiamine deficiency that can have additional long-term neurological consequences (e.g., Korsakoff syndrome, a condition characterized by memory impairment).

COMPLICATIONS OF LIVER DISEASE AND CIRRHOSIS

PORTAL HYPERTENSION AND VARICEAL BLEEDING

Fibrotic tissue in the liver causes resistance to blood flow, which increases blood pressure in the portal vein (known as portal hypertension). This can lead to blood backing up and flowing into smaller blood vessels (e.g., in the esophagus), causing them to balloon out. These enlarged vessels, known as varices, can rupture and bleed.

ESOPHAGEAL VARICES



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Acute variceal bleeding can be fatal. Treatment is typically multifactorial and includes:

- Supportive measures (e.g., blood transfusions, mechanical ventilation, correction of coagulopathy).
- Medications that vasoconstrict the splanchnic (GI) circulation, such as octreotide or terlipressin, to stop or minimize bleeding.
- Endoscopic evaluation to determine the source of bleeding and the most appropriate interventions to stop the bleeding, such as:
  - Band ligation (putting a band around the vessel).
  - Sclerotherapy (injecting a solution into the vessel to make it collapse and close).
  - Balloon tamponade.
  - Transjugular intrahepatic portosystemic shunt (TIPS), whereby a stent is placed in the liver to allow blood to flow directly from the portal vein to the hepatic vein (bypassing the scarred liver tissue).
- Intravenous, short-term (i.e., 2 – 5 days) antibiotic prophylaxis to reduce the risk of bacterial infections. Ceftriaxone is preferred over quinolones due to resistance.

VASOCONSTRICTING MEDICATIONS FOR VARICEAL BLEEDING

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Octreotide *(Sandostatin, Sandostatin LAR Depot)* Analog of somatostatin (inhibits vasodilatory hormones)	Bolus: 25-100 mcg IV (usual 50 mcg) Continuous infusion: 25-50 mcg/hr × 2-5 days	**SIDE EFFECTS** Bradycardia, cholelithiasis, biliary sludge, fatigue, HA, hypothyroidism, hyper/hypoglycemia (highest risk in type 1 diabetes), N/V/D, abdominal pain, dizziness, flatulence, constipation, injection site pain, URTIs **MONITORING** Blood glucose, HR, ECG
Terlipressin *(Terlivaz)* Antidiuretic hormone analog	1.7 mg IV Q4H until hemostasis achieved (up to 48 hrs), then 0.85 mg IV Q4H for 2-5 days	**BOXED WARNING** Serious or fatal respiratory failure **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Hypoxia, worsening respiratory symptoms, ongoing ischemia (coronary, peripheral, mesenteric) **SIDE EFFECTS** Hyponatremia, hypervolemia, ischemic events, respiratory failure, abdominal pain, nausea, diarrhea **MONITORING** Na, oxygen saturation, fluid status

NON-SELECTIVE BETA-BLOCKERS FOR PORTAL HYPERTENSION

Non-selective beta-blockers (NSBBs), specifically carvedilol, nadolol and propranolol, are used for primary and secondary prevention of variceal bleeding. They decrease cardiac output (via beta-1 blockade) and cause splanchnic vasoconstriction (via beta-2 blockade); this reduces portal venous inflow, resulting in decreased portal pressure. Carvedilol is a preferred agent because it has an added mechanism of decreasing portal pressure via its alpha-1 blocking effects (i.e., it causes vasodilation within the intrahepatic circulation). NSBBs are titrated to the maximally tolerated dose (target HR 55 – 60 BPM, SBP ≥ 90 mmHg) and continued indefinitely.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Nadolol ***(Corgard*)***	Initial: 20-40 mg daily	Refer to the Hypertension chapter for a complete review of beta-blockers **BOXED WARNING** Do not discontinue abruptly (particularly in patients with CAD/IHD); gradually taper dose over 1-2 wks to avoid acute tachycardia, hypertension and/or ischemia **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Severe bradycardia; 2nd or 3rd degree AV block or sick sinus syndrome (unless a permanent pacemaker is in place); overt cardiac failure or cardiogenic shock; bronchial asthma **WARNINGS** Use caution in patients with diabetes: can worsen hypoglycemia and mask hypoglycemic symptoms (see Diabetes chapter) Use caution with bronchospastic diseases (e.g., asthma, COPD) Use caution with Raynaud's/other peripheral vascular diseases (requires slow dose titration) and pheochromocytoma (requires adequate alpha-blockade first) Can mask signs of hyperthyroidism (e.g., tachycardia) **SIDE EFFECTS** Bradycardia, hypotension, CNS effects (e.g., fatigue, dizziness, depression), impotence, cold extremities (can exacerbate Raynaud's) **MONITORING** HR (↓ dose if symptomatic bradycardia), BP **NOTES** Propranolol has high lipid solubility (lipophilic) and crosses the blood-brain barrier; it is associated with more CNS side effects
Propranolol ***(Inderal LA, Inderal XL,*** *InnoPran XL)*	Initial: 20 mg BID	
Carvedilol ***(Coreg)***	Initial: 6.25 mg daily in 1-2 divided doses	Same as for nadolol and propranolol plus: **WARNING** Intraoperative floppy iris syndrome has occurred in cataract surgery patients who were on or were previously treated with an alpha-1 blocker **SIDE EFFECTS** Edema, weight gain **NOTES** Take carvedilol with food to ↓ the rate of absorption and the risk of orthostatic hypotension

**Brand discontinued but name still used in practice.*

HEPATIC ENCEPHALOPATHY

Symptoms of hepatic encephalopathy (HE) include musty odor of the breath and/or urine, confusion, forgetfulness, drowsiness, disorientation, mood changes, flapping hand tremor (asterixis), sluggish movements and coma. HE symptoms result from an accumulation of gut-derived nitrogenous substances in the blood (e.g., ammonia, glutamate) that are normally cleared by the liver but (due to impaired liver blood flow) are shunted through collateral vessels that empty directly into the circulation instead.

Treatment of HE includes identifying and treating precipitating factors and reducing blood ammonia levels through diet (by limiting the amount of animal protein) and drug therapy. The recommended daily protein intake is 1.2 – 1.5 g/kg. Vegetable and dairy sources of protein are preferred due to the lower calorie to nitrogen ratio.

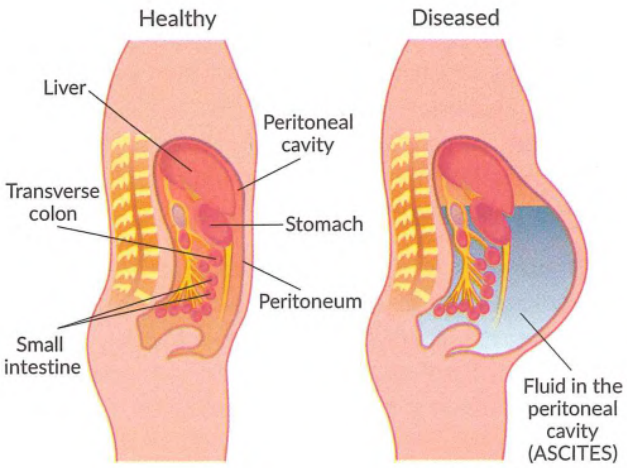
Drug treatment options for HE include lactulose (a nonabsorbable disaccharide) and rifaximin (an antibiotic). Lactulose is first line for both treatment and prevention; it converts ammonia produced by intestinal bacteria to ammonium, which is polar and cannot readily diffuse from the GI tract into the blood. Rifaximin inhibits the activity of urease-producing bacteria, which decreases ammonia production; it can be added in patients whose mental status does not adequately improve with lactulose treatment alone.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Lactulose *(Enulose, Constulose, Generlac, Kristalose)* Oral solution and packet	PO: 30-45 mL (20-30 grams) per dose; titrate to produce 2-3 bowel movements daily (typically used 2-4 times per day) Enema: 300 mL (200 grams) in 700 mL NS or water, retained for 30-60 minutes; repeat Q4-8H PRN	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Low galactose diet **SIDE EFFECTS** Flatulence, diarrhea, dyspepsia, abdominal pain, dehydration, hypernatremia, hypokalemia **MONITORING** Mental status, bowel movements, ammonia levels, fluid status, electrolytes
Rifaximin *(Xifaxan)* Tablet	400 mg PO Q8H or 550 mg PO BID	**SIDE EFFECTS** Peripheral edema, dizziness, fatigue, nausea, ascites, headache **MONITORING** Mental status, ammonia levels

ASCITES

Ascites (fluid accumulation within the peritoneal space) can lead to other complications, including spontaneous bacterial peritonitis (SBP) and hepatorenal syndrome (HRS). Treatment of ascites can vary based on the severity; all patients with cirrhosis and ascites should be considered for liver transplantation.

Patients with ascites due to portal hypertension should restrict dietary sodium intake to < 2 grams/day, avoid sodium-retaining medications (including NSAIDs) and use diuretics to remove excess fluid. Fluid restriction is recommended in patients with moderate or severe hyponatremia (serum Na ≤ 125 mEq/L).



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Diuretic therapy for ascites includes spironolactone monotherapy or a combination of furosemide and spironolactone; furosemide monotherapy is ineffective. Spironolactone is initiated at 50 – 100 mg daily and can be titrated up to 400 mg daily. A ratio of 40 mg furosemide to 100 mg spironolactone is recommended for combination therapy to maintain potassium balance.

In severe cases, abdominal paracentesis is needed to directly remove ascitic fluid. Large-volume paracentesis (removal of > 5 L) is associated with significant fluid shifts, and the administration of albumin (6 – 8 grams per liter of fluid removed) is recommended to prevent paracentesis-induced circulatory dysfunction and progression to HRS.

SPONTANEOUS BACTERIAL PERITONITIS

Spontaneous bacterial peritonitis (SBP) is an acute infection that is suspected when cell analysis of an ascitic fluid sample (collected by paracentesis) reveals ≥ 250 cells/mm^3 PMNs (polymorphonuclear leukocytes). Targeting streptococci and enteric gram-negative pathogens with ceftriaxone (or an equivalent) for 5 – 7 days is recommended. The addition of albumin can improve survival in some patients. Following an initial SBP episode, patients should receive secondary prophylaxis with oral ciprofloxacin or sulfamethoxazole/trimethoprim.

HEPATORENAL SYNDROME

Hepatorenal syndrome (HRS) is the development of renal failure in patients with advanced cirrhosis. It occurs as a result of renal vasoconstriction, which is mediated by activation of the renin-angiotensin-aldosterone system (RAAS) and the sympathetic nervous system. Prevention of HRS (by effectively managing the complications of cirrhosis) is critical given the high mortality rate and lack of effective pharmacologic treatments.

HRS can be treated with vasoconstrictors, such as terlipressin, which improves renal blood flow by causing splanchnic vasoconstriction. When terlipressin is not available, medical management of HRS can include a combination of albumin, octreotide and midodrine. The definitive treatment of HRS is liver transplantation.

KEY COUNSELING POINTS

See the Drug Formulations and Patient Counseling chapter for counseling language/layman's terminology.

ALL DIRECT-ACTING ANTIVIRALS

- Many drug interactions.

MAVYRET

- Take with food.

RIBAVIRIN

- Avoid pregnancy, including in female partners of treated males; undergo periodic pregnancy testing and use two forms of effective contraception.

NRTIs

- Can cause lactic acidosis.
- Take entecavir on an empty stomach.

BETA-BLOCKERS

- Do not abruptly discontinue without consulting your healthcare provider.

Select Guidelines/References

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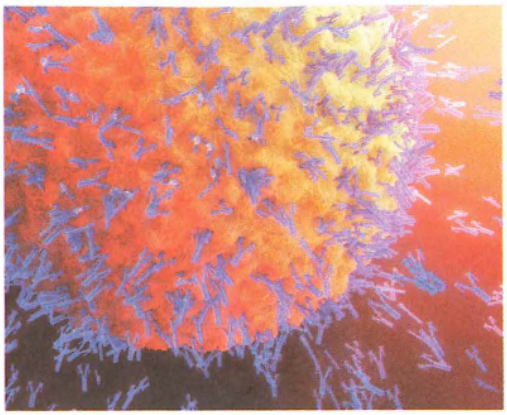
IMMUNIZATIONS & TRAVELERS



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CHAPTER 20

IMMUNIZATIONS

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= Study Tip Gal = Key Drugs Guy

BACKGROUND

Vaccines prevent patients from acquiring serious or potentially fatal diseases. Childhood diseases that used to be common (e.g., diphtheria, meningitis, polio, tetanus) are now rare because children are vaccinated or are protected by herd immunity (when vaccinated people protect the unvaccinated, making them less likely to become infected). If vaccination rates drop below 85% – 95%, vaccine-preventable diseases can become more prevalent and result in outbreaks.

VACCINE RESOURCES

- The FDA approves the indication for a vaccine based on the demonstrated safety and efficacy.
- The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) provides the recommendations for vaccine administration in children and adults (i.e., who gets what vaccine and when).
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) approves the ACIP recommendations and publishes them in the CDC's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR).
- Immunize.org and The Pink Book (Epidemiology and Prevention of Vaccine-Preventable Diseases) provide vaccine information and education materials for healthcare professionals.

RELIABLE VACCINE INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS

A Vaccine Information Statement (VIS) is prepared by the CDC for each vaccine to explain the benefits and risks. Federal law requires that a VIS be handed to the patient (or parent) before a vaccination is administered. VISs can be found on the CDC website and Immunize.org.

Informed consent ensures the patient's ethical right to autonomy (i.e., make informed decisions about their life). It involves clear communication about the benefits, risks and alternatives to medical care. Federal law does not require informed consent before immunization, but some state laws do. A VIS can serve as an informed consent form, but state laws may have additional requirements (e.g., regarding documentation).

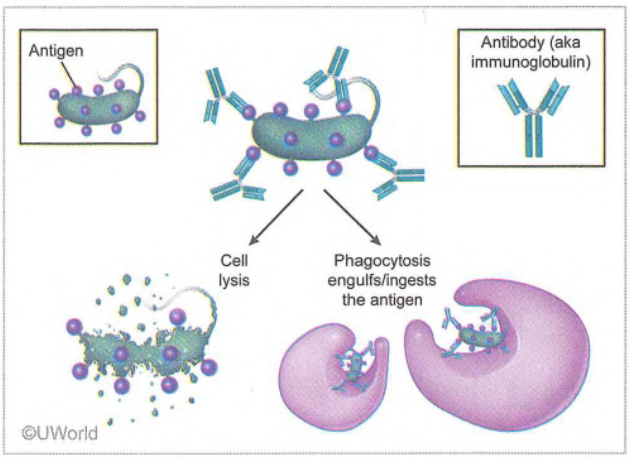
VACCINES AND AUTISM

Some people believe that vaccines cause autism. The causes of autism are not fully understood, but there is no evidence that autism is caused by vaccines. Parents often first notice the behaviors of autism at an age when most childhood vaccine series are near completion (e.g., 18 – 24 months).

Thimerosal, a mercury-containing preservative used in some vaccines, was alleged to contribute to the increase in autism since mercury has been linked to some brain disorders. There is no evidence that thimerosal poses a risk for autism. Thimerosal was removed from childhood vaccines in 2001, and the rates of autism continued to increase. Thimerosal is in some multidose flu vaccines; parents can request a single-dose flu vaccine that does not contain a preservative, or a multidose vaccine without thimerosal.

IMMUNITY

The purpose of the immune system is to distinguish self substances (normal body parts/components) from non-self (foreign) substances, which are called antigens. When an antigen is detected, antibodies are produced to provide immunity and destroy the antigen. Immunoglobulin is the medical term for antibody.



Immunity is acquired actively or passively. Active immunity develops when the person's own immune system produces antibodies to fight an infection or in response to a vaccine. Passive immunity is acquired when antibodies are provided from someone else (see image on next page).

Active Immunity

When a person's own immune system creates antibodies (in response to a vaccine or infection). Lasts a long time, often a lifetime.

Passive Immunity

Received from someone else, such as receiving immunoglobulins (Ig) that are pooled from other people, or through transfer from a mother to baby.

Mother gives baby a copy of her immunoglobulins before birth. These provide short-term immunity until the child's own antibody production increases.

Intravenous immunoglobulin (IVIG) provides already made antibodies, and can be used for quick immunity after exposure to an antigen. For example, a person who is bitten by a rabid animal will receive the rabies vaccine (which will take time to work) and rabies immunoglobulin, to help the patient fight the rabies organism right away.

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TYPES OF VACCINES

Live attenuated (weakened) vaccines are produced by modifying a disease-producing ("wild") virus or bacterium. They have the ability to replicate and produce immunity but usually do not cause illness. Live attenuated vaccines are most similar to the actual disease and produce a strong immune response to the vaccine, but they are contraindicated in immunocompromised and pregnant patients since uncontrolled replication of the pathogen can occur.

Most inactivated vaccines are composed of either killed whole virus or bacterium, or fractions of either. Immunity resulting from an inactivated vaccine can diminish with time and supplemental (booster) doses may be required to increase immunity.

INACTIVATED VACCINES

Inactivated vaccines use the killed version of a wild virus or bacteria that causes the disease. Inactivated vaccines cannot replicate (and cause disease). They are less affected by circulating antibodies than live vaccines.*

Limitation: immunity is not as strong as with live vaccines; boosters may be required for ongoing immunity.

Polysaccharide, Conjugate and Recombinant Vaccines

Target a section of the organism, such as a protein, sugar, or capsid (outer casing).

Polysaccharide Vaccines

Polysaccharide (sugar) molecules are taken from the outside layer of encapsulated bacteria. Polysaccharide vaccines do not produce a good immune response in children < 2 years of age.

Ex: Pneumococcal Polysaccharide Vaccine *(Pneumovax 23)*

Conjugate Vaccines

Conjugate vaccines use polysaccharide (sugar) molecules from the outside layer of encapsulated bacteria and join the molecules to carrier proteins. Conjugation increases the immune response in infants, and the antibody response to multiple doses of vaccine.

Ex: Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccine *(Prevnar 20)*, Meningococcal Conjugate Vaccine *(Menveo)*

Recombinant Vaccines

A gene segment of a protein from the organism is inserted into the gene of another cell, such as a yeast cell, where it replicates.

Ex: Human Papillomavirus Vaccine *(Gardasil 9)*, Recombinant Influenza Vaccine *(Flublok Quadrivalent)*

Toxoid Vaccines

The vaccine targets a toxin produced by the disease.

Ex: Diphtheria Toxoid Vaccine, Tetanus Toxoid Vaccine

mRNA Vaccines

The vaccine gives instructions to the body's cells (in the form of mRNA) to produce a protein specific to the pathogen, which then triggers an immune response.

Ex: select COVID-19 Vaccines

LIVE VACCINES

Live vaccines are most similar to the actual disease and provide a strong, long-lasting immune response.

Limitations: 1) Patients who are immunocompromised may not be able to halt replication; vaccination could cause the disease. 2) Circulating antibodies can interfere with vaccine replication.*

See the Key Drugs Guy for a list of common live vaccines.

*See the Live Vaccines and Antibodies section.

COMMON LIVE VACCINES

KEY DRUGS

MMR
Intranasal Influenza
Cholera
Rotavirus
Oral Typhoid
Varicella
Yellow Fever
Remember: **MICRO-VY**

Others:
Tuberculosis (BCG)
Dengue
Smallpox
Ebola

TIMING AND SPACING OF VACCINES

SIMULTANEOUS ADMINISTRATION

Most live and inactivated vaccines can be administered simultaneously (on the same day) without decreasing the antibody response or increasing the risk of adverse reactions (see Study Tip Gal on next page). This is especially important for children; simultaneous administration improves adherence to the immunization schedule and increases the probability that a child will be fully immunized (and protected) at the appropriate age. Combination vaccines help accomplish this with less injections.

VACCINES GIVEN IN A SERIES

Increasing the interval between the doses of a vaccine given in a series does not diminish the effectiveness of the vaccine after completion of the series, but it delays complete protection. Decreasing the interval between doses of a vaccine can interfere with the antibody response and is avoided. In some cases, the interval can be shortened for high-risk (e.g., immunocompromised) patients.

LIVE VACCINES AND ANTIBODIES

Antibodies (present in some blood and IVIG products) can interfere with live vaccine replication and a separation period may be required (see Study Tip Gal on next page). This is a concern with live vaccines because replication is required to produce an immune response.

The interval between an antibody-containing product and a measles, mumps and rubella (MMR)-containing vaccine or varicella-containing vaccine is at minimum 3 months and up to 11 months. The product and dose determines the separation time.

Maternal antibodies passed from a mother to baby before birth reduce the infant's response to live vaccines. Most live vaccines are therefore withheld until the child is 12 months of age, when the maternal antibodies are depleted. An exception is live rotavirus vaccine, which is given to infants. It is effective at preventing rotavirus-induced gastroenteritis despite the presence of maternal antibodies.

Inactivated vaccines can be given at any time. Inactivated vaccines are started when an infant is two months old, except for the hepatitis B vaccine series, which is started at birth.

LIVE VACCINES AND THE TB SKIN TEST

The tuberculin skin test (TST), also called a purified protein derivative (PPD) test, can be used to diagnose latent tuberculosis (TB). Live vaccines can cause a false negative TST result. Options to reduce this risk include:

1. Give the live vaccine on the same day as the TST.
2. Wait 4 weeks after a live vaccine to perform the TST.
3. Administer the TST first, then give the live vaccine.

VACCINE TIMING & SPACING

General Rules

- Vaccines can usually be given at the same time (same visit or same day).
- Multiple live vaccines can be given on the same day or (if not given on the same day) spaced 4 weeks apart.*
- If a vaccine series requires > 1 dose, the intervals between doses can be extended without restarting the series, but they should not be shortened in most cases.

Live Vaccines and Antibodies

- MMR and varicella-containing vaccines require separation from antibody-containing products (e.g., blood transfusions, IVIG). The recommended spacing is:
  - Vaccine → 2 weeks → antibody-containing product
  - Antibody-containing product → ≥ 3 months → vaccine
- Simultaneous administration of vaccine and antibody (immunoglobulin) is recommended for post-exposure prophylaxis of certain diseases (e.g., hepatitis A and B, rabies, tetanus).

**Exception: no separation is required for oral rotavirus or typhoid vaccines.*

VACCINE ADVERSE REACTIONS

Reactions range from local (e.g., soreness, redness) to life-threatening (e.g., anaphylaxis). Patients are screened for precautions and contraindications before vaccination to reduce the risk of severe reactions (see the Screening Prior to Vaccine Administration section on the next page).

The patient should be monitored for at least 15 minutes after vaccination to watch for an allergic reaction, syncope, dizziness or falls. Adverse reactions that require some type of assistance should be reported to the patient's healthcare provider and the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS).

LOCAL REACTIONS

Local reactions occur at or near the injection site. These are common, more so with inactivated vaccines, and include pain, swelling and redness. Rarely, local reactions may be severe.

SYSTEMIC REACTIONS

Systemic reactions are less common than local reactions. They include fever, malaise, myalgia (muscle pain), headache, loss of appetite or a mild illness that has similarities to the disease being prevented, such as a few chickenpox vesicles after receiving the varicella vaccine. Patients who have experienced systemic symptoms after a flu shot might think (incorrectly) that the vaccine caused the flu. The flu shot is an inactivated (killed) vaccine and cannot cause disease.

With live vaccines, mild systemic reactions can occur 3 – 21 days after the vaccine is given (after an incubation period). Intranasal flu vaccine can replicate in the upper airways (nose and throat) and can cause mild cold-like symptoms, such as a runny nose.

TRUE ALLERGIC REACTIONS

True allergic reactions are uncommon, and can be caused by the vaccine itself or a component of the vaccine product, such as a stabilizer, preservative or antibiotic (used to inhibit bacterial growth). Minor allergic reactions will resolve quickly and can be treated with diphenhydramine or hydroxyzine. A minor reaction is not a contraindication to future vaccinations.

Severe allergic reactions are very rare (< 1 in 500,000 doses). An anaphylactic reaction is life-threatening if not managed correctly (see section on the next page). Anaphylactic reactions are IgE-mediated and occur within 30 – 60 minutes of receiving the vaccine. Symptoms can include urticaria (hives), swelling of the mouth and throat, difficulty breathing, wheezing, abdominal cramping and hypotension or shock.

MANAGEMENT OF SEVERE ALLERGIC REACTIONS

All providers who administer vaccines must have an emergency protocol and supplies to manage anaphylaxis. The healthcare provider should remain with the patient, assessing airway, breathing, circulation and level of consciousness. A second person should activate the emergency medical system (EMS) by calling 911.

Care should be provided until EMS arrives:

- For adults, administer epinephrine 1 mg/mL (1:1,000 dilution) intramuscularly, 0.01 mg/kg (maximum dose is 0.5 mg). Most pharmacies use prefilled epinephrine auto-injectors. At least three adult (0.3 mg) auto-injectors should be available. Most adults require 1 – 3 doses administered every 5 – 15 minutes.
- Diphenhydramine can be given to reduce swelling and pruritus. Oral drugs should not be administered if airway swelling is present due to a risk of choking.
- The patient should be placed in a supine position (on the back), unless they have difficulty breathing. Elevating the head will help breathing, but caution must be taken to keep the blood pressure adequate. If blood pressure is low, elevate the legs. Monitor blood pressure and pulse every 5 minutes.
- Provide cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), if necessary. Immunizing pharmacists need current basic life support (BLS) certification.
- Record all vital signs and administered medications.

VACCINE CONTRAINDICATIONS AND PRECAUTIONS

There are specific circumstances when vaccines should not be given. Most precautions are temporary, and the vaccine can be given at a later time. For example, if the patient has a moderate or severe acute illness, vaccine administration should be delayed until it resolves. Mild acute illness is not a precaution, and the vaccine can be administered.

A contraindication is a condition that significantly increases the risk of a serious adverse reaction. Immunosuppression and pregnancy are important contraindications to the use of live vaccines. Live vaccine administration must be timed carefully in patients who have recently received an antibody-containing blood product, as previously described. A severe or anaphylactic reaction following a vaccine dose is a contraindication to any subsequent doses of the same vaccine.

INVALID CONTRAINDICATIONS TO VACCINATION

Vaccinations may be given, if indicated, in the following situations:

- Mild acute illness (slight fever, mild diarrhea)
- Current antimicrobial treatment (some exceptions: see varicella, live influenza, oral typhoid vaccines)
- Previous mild-moderate local skin reaction from a vaccine
- Allergy to penicillin or products not in the vaccine
- Pregnancy (except live vaccines), breastfeeding, premature birth
- Recent tuberculin skin test (see text for timing and spacing with live vaccines only)
- Immunosuppressed person in the household, recent exposure to the disease or convalescence
- Family history of adverse events to the vaccine

SCREENING PRIOR TO VACCINE ADMINISTRATION

A screening form rules out specific contraindications and precautions to vaccines. A "yes" response to some of these questions indicates a type of vaccine to use, rather than a contraindication to all formulations.

1. Are you sick today?
2. Do you have allergies to medications, food, a vaccine component or latex?
3. Have you ever had a serious reaction after receiving a vaccine?
4. Do you have a long-term health problem caused by heart disease, lung disease, kidney disease, metabolic disease (e.g., diabetes), anemia or other blood disorder?
5. Do you have cancer, leukemia, AIDS or any other immune system problem?
6. Do you take cortisone, prednisone, other steroids, anticancer drugs or have you had radiation treatments?
7. Have you ever had a seizure or nervous system problem?
8. During the past year, have you received a transfusion of blood or blood products, or been given immune globulin or an antiviral drug?
9. Are you pregnant or do you plan to become pregnant during the next month?
10. Have you received a vaccine in the last 4 weeks?

VACCINE CONTRAINDICATIONS AND PRECAUTIONS

VACCINE	CONTRAINDICATIONS	PRECAUTIONS
All vaccines	Severe allergic reaction (e.g., anaphylaxis) to a vaccine or vaccine component after a previous dose.	Illness: If only a mild illness (such as a cold), vaccines should be given (see the Study Tip Gal). Treatment with antibiotics is not a valid reason to delay vaccines. If moderate or severe acute illness (regardless of antibiotic use) it is reasonable to delay vaccination until the condition has improved.
Live vaccines	Pregnancy (do not attempt to become pregnant until 4 weeks after receiving a live vaccine). Immunosuppression (see the Vaccinations for Specific Conditions/Populations chart).	Recent administration of an antibody-containing blood product (see the section on Live Vaccines and Antibodies).
Diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis vaccines	Pertussis-containing vaccines: encephalopathy (e.g., coma, decreased level of consciousness, prolonged seizures) that is not attributable to another cause within 7 days after receiving a previous pertussis-containing vaccine.	Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS) within 6 weeks of a previous diphtheria, tetanus and/or pertussis vaccine. For DTaP and Tdap only: infantile spasms, uncontrolled seizures.
Hepatitis B vaccines Human papillomavirus vaccine (HPV)	Hypersensitivity to yeast.	
Influenza vaccines	Live attenuated influenza vaccine (LAIV): pregnant, immunosuppressed, use of aspirin-containing products (children and adolescents), recent use of influenza antiviral medications (oseltamivir or zanamivir in the past 48 hours, peramivir in the last 5 days or baloxavir in the last 17 days), children age 2-4 years with asthma or a wheezing episode in the last 12 months, close contact with an immunosuppressed person.	All influenza vaccines: history of GBS within 6 weeks of a previous influenza vaccination. LAIV: asthma in any patient age ≥ 5 years, underlying conditions that predispose to influenza complications (e.g., chronic lung, heart, renal, hepatic, neurologic, hematologic and metabolic disorders, including diabetes).
Recombinant zoster vaccine (RZV)		Pregnancy, breastfeeding: consider delaying vaccination.
Varicella vaccines	History of severe allergic reaction (e.g., anaphylaxis) to gelatin or neomycin.	Use of acyclovir, famciclovir or valacyclovir in the 24 hours before vaccination; avoid these antivirals for 14 days after vaccination.
Rotavirus vaccines	History of intussusception (when part of the intestine slides into an adjacent intestine part, blocking food/fluids).	Chronic gastrointestinal disease.
Yellow fever vaccine	Severe allergic reaction (e.g., anaphylaxis) to eggs or gelatin.	
Latex present on vial stoppers and in prefilled syringes	Most latex sensitivities are a contact-type allergy, which does not prohibit vaccine administration; if the reaction to latex is severe (e.g., anaphylactic), avoid vaccine products packaged with latex.	

VACCINATIONS FOR SPECIFIC CONDITIONS/POPULATIONS

VACCINATIONS FOR SPECIAL GROUPS*

**An annual influenza vaccine is recommended for all special groups (age ≥ 6 months).*

Infants and Children

- 3-dose hepatitis B vaccine started at birth
- RSV monoclonal antibody if mother was not vaccinated during pregnancy
- Other vaccine series start at age 2 months: PCV15 or PCV20, DTaP, Hib, polio, rotavirus
- Live vaccine series generally start at age ≥ 12 months, including: MMR, varicella
- No polysaccharide vaccines before age 2 years

Adolescents and Young Adults

- Meningococcal quadrivalent vaccine (MenACWY) *(Menveo* or *MenQuadfi)*
  - ❑ 2 doses: 1 dose at age 11-12 years and 1 dose at age 16 years
  - ❑ First-year college students in residential housing (if not previously vaccinated): 1 dose
- Human papillomavirus vaccine
  - ❑ Recommended at age 11-12 years
  - ❑ 2 or 3 doses (depending on age at start)
- Tdap: first dose at age 11-12 years

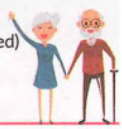
Pregnancy

- Live vaccines are contraindicated
- Inactivated influenza vaccine, given in any trimester
- RSV vaccine *(Abrysvo)* administered if at weeks 32-36 during RSV season
- Tdap x 1 with each pregnancy (weeks 27-36, optimally)*

**To protect the infant from pertussis; also vaccinate others in close contact with the infant (e.g., father, grandparents, child-care providers), if not up-to-date.*

Older Adults

- Herpes zoster vaccine *(Shingrix)*: age ≥ 50 years, 2 doses, 2-6 months apart
- Pneumococcal vaccine (age ≥ 50 years), give one of the following regimens:
  - ❑ PCV20 x 1
  - ❑ PCV21 x 1
  - ❑ PCV15 x 1, then PPSV23 x 1 ≥ 12 months later (or ≥ 8 weeks later if immunocompromised)
- Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) vaccine (age ≥ 75 years)



Diabetes

- Pneumococcal vaccine (age 19-49 years), give one of the following regimens:
  - ❑ PCV20 x 1
  - ❑ PCV21 x 1
  - ❑ PCV15 x 1, then PPSV23 x 1 ≥ 12 months later (or ≥ 8 weeks later if immunocompromised)
- Hepatitis B: age ≥ 60 years (if not previously vaccinated)

Healthcare Professionals

—including pharmacists, nurses, physicians

- Annual influenza vaccine is usually required by employers
- Hepatitis B, varicella and MMR if there is no demonstrated immunity (by vaccination history or blood test)

Sickle Cell Disease & Other Causes of Asplenia (Damaged/Missing Spleen)

—the spleen contains T-cells and B-cells; a damaged or missing spleen (e.g., splenectomy) causes a type of immunodeficiency

- *H. influenzae* type b (Hib) vaccine
- Pneumococcal vaccine (age 19-49 years), give one of the following regimens:
  - ❑ PCV20 x 1
  - ❑ PCV21 x 1
  - ❑ PCV15 x 1, then PPSV23 x 1 ≥ 8 weeks later
- Meningococcal vaccines
  - ❑ Meningococcal quadrivalent vaccine (MenACWY) *(Menveo* or *MenQuadfi)*
  - ❑ Meningococcal serogroup B vaccine (MenB) *(Bexsero* or *Trumenba)*

Immunodeficiency

—called altered immunocompetence, immunosuppression or immunocompromise; caused by drugs or conditions**

- Live vaccines are contraindicated
- Pneumococcal vaccine (age 19-49 years), give one of the following regimens:
  - ❑ PCV20 x 1
  - ❑ PCV21 x 1
  - ❑ PCV15 x 1, then PPSV23 x 1 ≥ 8 weeks later
- Herpes zoster vaccine *(Shingrix)*: age ≥ 19 years, 2 doses, 2-6 months apart
- Additional vaccines for patients with HIV infection
  - ❑ Meningococcal quadrivalent vaccine (MenACWY) *(Menveo* or *MenQuadfi)*
  - ❑ Hepatitis A vaccine
  - ❑ Hepatitis B vaccine

***Immunocompromising conditions:*

- *Chronic renal failure or nephrotic syndrome*
- *Malignancy*
- *HIV infection (but if CD4 count is well controlled, live vaccines may be considered)*
- *Solid organ transplant*
- *Treatment with immunosuppressive drugs [e.g., chemotherapy, TNF-alpha inhibitors, transplant medications, systemic steroids ≥ 14 days at doses equivalent to ≥ 20 mg (or 2 mg/kg) prednisone daily]*

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VACCINATIONS FOR ADULTS

Influenza

Annually for all patients

Tdap, Td

Tdap x 1 if not received previously, then Td or Tdap every 10 years

Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)

All adults age ≥ 75 years or ≥ 60 years if at increased risk*

One lifetime dose

**COPD, asthma, heart failure, kidney or liver disease, diabetes, immunocompromised, residence in a long-term care facility*

Human Papillomavirus (HPV)

Adults ≤ 26 years who did not complete the HPV series*

**Can be given at age 27-45 years based on shared clinical decision making.*

Shingles

Shingrix:
All adults age ≥ 50 years or ≥ 19 years if immunosuppressed (or expected to become immunosuppressed)

2-dose series, with second dose given 2-6 months after the first dose (can shorten to 1-2 months if immunosuppressed)

Vaccinate even if patient previously had chickenpox or shingles or received *Zostavax*

Meningococcal

Serogroup B (MenB) vaccines *(Bexsero, Trumenba)*: give if complement component deficiency, taking eculizumab or ravulizumab, asplenia, microbiologist with exposure to *Neisseria meningitidis*, serogroup B meningococcal disease outbreak exposure

Quadrivalent conjugate (MenACWY) vaccines *(Menveo, MenQuadfi)*:
same groups as above, plus: HIV, travelers/residents to countries in which the disease is common, military recruits, first-year college students living in residential housing, if not up-to-date

Pneumococcal

Age 19-49 years with a specific medical condition* or age ≥ 50 years (if never received before): PCV20 x 1, PCV21 x 1 or PCV15 x 1 followed by PPSV23 ≥ 12 months later (or ≥ 8 weeks later if immunocompromised)

**Alcohol use disorder, cigarette smoking, diabetes, chronic heart, lung or liver disease, sickle cell disease/asplenia, HIV infection, malignancy, solid organ transplant, chronic renal failure, taking immunosuppressive drugs (e.g., chemotherapy, long-term systemic steroids)*

Hepatitis A

Adults traveling to an endemic area, household members and other close contacts of adopted children newly arriving from countries with moderate-high infection risk, liver disease, hemophilia, men who have sex with men, illicit drug use, people experiencing homelessness, HIV

Give alone or with hepatitis B vaccine *(Twinrix)*

Hepatitis B

If not previously vaccinated, all adults age 19-59 years and patients ≥ 60 years with risk factors, including chronic liver disease, HIV infection, exposure via sexual activity (e.g., men who have sex with men, multiple sex partners), IV drug use, incarcerated, travel to an endemic area, blood exposure (e.g., healthcare personnel, diabetes, dialysis)

Give alone or with hepatitis A vaccine *(Twinrix)*

ROUTINE VACCINES

VACCINE	ADMINISTRATION RECOMMENDATIONS	STORAGE/ ADMINISTRATION
COVID-19 Vaccines **Administer the updated formulation of the vaccine designed to protect against the likely circulating variants.**		
mRNA Vaccines: *Comirnaty* (Pfizer-BioNTech), *Spikevax* (Moderna) Protein Subunit Vaccine: Novavax COVID-19 Vaccine	**Previously unvaccinated and age ≥ 12 years** 1 dose of Moderna or Pfizer-BioNTech or a 2-dose series of Novavax (given at weeks 0 and 3-8). **Previously vaccinated and age 12-64 years** 1 dose of any vaccine administered at least 8 weeks after the most recent COVID-19 vaccine. **Previously vaccinated and age ≥ 65 years** 2 doses of any vaccine at months 0 and 2-6. **Age < 12 years or immunocompromised** Consult the CDC website	Storage varies by product. Give IM.
Diphtheria Toxoid-, Tetanus Toxoid- and acellular Pertussis-Containing Vaccines **The pediatric formulations (with the upper-case D, as in DTaP) have 3-5 times more diphtheria component than the adult formulations. The adult formulations have a lower-case d (Tdap or Td).**		
DTaP: *Daptacel, Infanrix* DTaP-IPV: *Kinrix, Quadracel* **DTaP-HepB-IPV: *Pediarix*** DTaP-IPV / Hib: *Pentacel* DTaP-IPV-Hib-HepB: *Vaxelis* Td: *Tenivac, TDVax* **Tdap: *Adacel, Boostrix***	**DTaP** Routine childhood vaccine series; 5 doses given at age 2, 4, 6, 15-18 months and 4-6 years. For children age < 7 years. **Td or Tdap** Tdap booster typically given at age 11-12 years. Routine booster given every 10 years in adults. Otherwise recommended for: 1. Pregnant people in the third trimester of each pregnancy (see Vaccinations for Specific Conditions/Populations) to prevent pertussis in infants age < 2 months. 2. Close contacts of infants age < 12 months (e.g., parent, grandparent, child-care provider), if not up-to-date. 3. Healthcare personnel with direct patient contact, if not up-to-date. 4. Wound prophylaxis, if deep or dirty wound and > 5 years since the last Td or Tdap dose. Tetanus immunoglobulin (TIG) may be required if no previous tetanus vaccines have been given.	Store in the refrigerator. Do not freeze. Shake the prefilled syringe or vial before use. Give IM.
***Haemophilus influenzae* Type B (Hib)-Containing Vaccines**		
Hib: *ActHIB, Hiberix, PedvaxHIB* DTaP-IPV / Hib: *Pentacel* DTaP-IPV-Hib-HepB: *Vaxelis*	Hib: routine childhood vaccine series given ages 2-15 months. *ActHIB* and *Hiberix* are 4-dose series, *PedvaxHIB* is a 3-dose series. Given to adults with asplenia.	Store in the refrigerator. Do not freeze. Shake the prefilled syringe or vial before use. Give IM.

VACCINE	ADMINISTRATION RECOMMENDATIONS	STORAGE/ ADMINISTRATION
Hepatitis-Containing Vaccines		
Hepatitis A: ***Havrix, Vaqta*** **Hepatitis B:** ***Engerix-B, Heplisav-B, Recombivax HB*** *Engerix-B* and *Recombivax HB:* available in pediatric and adult strengths *Heplisav-B:* for age ≥ 18 years only High-dose *Recombivax HB* (40 mcg/mL) is indicated for dialysis patients Hepatitis A and B: *Twinrix* **DTaP-HepB-IPV:** ***Pediarix*** DTaP-IPV-Hib-HepB: *Vaxelis*	**Hepatitis A** Children: routine childhood vaccine series; 2 doses at age 12-23 months (minimal interval between doses is 6 months). Adults: men who have sex with men, illicit drug use, chronic liver disease, people experiencing homelessness, HIV infection, travelers to an endemic area, anyone else who wants it. **Hepatitis B** Children: routine childhood vaccine series started within 24 hours after birth; 3 doses at ages 0, 1-2 and 6-18 months. Adults (if not previously vaccinated): all age 19-59 years or those ≥ 60 years with risk factors, including chronic liver disease, HIV infection, blood exposure (e.g., healthcare workers, dialysis, diabetes), IV drug use, sexual exposure risk (e.g., men who have sex with men, multiple partners), incarcerated people, travel to an endemic area. *Engerix-B* and *Recombivax HB:* 3-dose series at ages 0, 1 and 6 months (can complete in 4 months if necessary, but may require a booster at 1 year if the series is accelerated). *Heplisav-B:* 2-dose series at ages 0 and 1 month. **Hepatitis A and B** 3-dose series at ages 0, 1 and 6 months; can be completed faster if needed prior to travel to high-risk areas.	Store in the refrigerator. Do not freeze. Shake vial or prefilled syringe before use. Give IM.
Human Papillomavirus Vaccine **Prevents cervical, vulvar, vaginal, oropharyngeal, penile and anal cancers, and genital warts.**		
HPV9 (9-Valent): ***Gardasil 9***	**Age 9-26 Years*** Recommended age: 11-12 years (may be started at age 9). Use is contraindicated with a severe yeast allergy. **Regimens** If started before age 15 → 2 doses (at months 0 and 6-12) If started at age 15 or older, or if immunocompromised → 3 doses (at months 0, 1-2 and 6)	Store in refrigerator. Do not freeze. Shake the prefilled syringe or vial before use. Give IM. Caution for fainting (although incidence is similar to other vaccines); administer to seated patient and monitor after vaccination.

**Recommended by ACIP for anyone ≤ 26 years, and for some adults age 27-45 years per clinical shared decision making. Start at age 9 years in anyone with a history of sexual abuse.*

INFLUENZA VACCINES

Influenza (the flu) is one of the most common vaccine-preventable illnesses in the U.S. Influenza A and B are the two types of influenza viruses that cause epidemic disease. Influenza A virus has subtypes based on the two surface antigens, hemagglutinin and neuraminidase. Immunity to the surface antigens reduces the likelihood of infection, and severity of disease if infection occurs. Trivalent vaccines protect against two influenza A's and one influenza B.

The influenza vaccine is given annually. The vaccine changes every year to account for antigenic drift, which causes variations in the virus. More dramatic antigenic changes, or shifts, occur approximately every 30 years and can result in the emergence of a novel influenza virus, with the potential to cause a pandemic.

Influenza vaccination helps prevent complications due to influenza illness, which can exacerbate underlying medical conditions (e.g., pulmonary or cardiac disease) and lead to secondary bacterial pneumonia or primary influenza viral pneumonia. Vaccination reduces hospitalizations and death, which are more common in people with comorbid conditions or those age < 5 years or ≥ 65 years. See the Infectious Diseases III chapter for a discussion on the signs and symptoms of influenza and treatment with antiviral medications.

INFLUENZA VACCINE TIPS

RECOMMENDED ANNUALLY

All patients age ≥ 6 months, unless contraindicated.

All brand names have FLU in the name (e.g., *Afluria*).

SPECIFIC PATIENT CONSIDERATIONS

- **Age 6 months to 8 years on first vaccination (or only one dose given previously in their lifetime)**
  - ☐ Give 2 doses (4 weeks apart).
- **Patients with an egg allergy**
  - ☐ Can receive any age-appropriate flu vaccine, even if severe allergy symptoms to egg (e.g., requiring epinephrine). No additional observation period is recommended (beyond 15 minutes).
  - ☐ Egg-free products include *Flublok* (approved for age ≥ 18 years only) and *Flucelvax*.
- **Pregnant patients**
  - ☐ Can receive any age-appropriate inactivated influenza vaccine. Do not administer the live influenza vaccine *(FluMist)*.
- **Patients age ≥ 65 years**
  - ☐ *Fluzone High-Dose, Fluad* or *Flublok* are preferred.

VACCINE	ADMINISTRATION RECOMMENDATIONS	STORAGE/ ADMINISTRATION
Influenza Vaccines **Key differences between vaccines include whether the vaccine is inactivated (IIV) or live attenuated (LAIV), the route (IM, intranasal), the antigen dose or the presence of adjuvant.**		
Inactivated Influenza Vaccine (IIV) ■ ***Afluria, Fluarix, FluLaval, Fluzone:*** for age ≥ 6 months ■ ***Flucelvax*** (grown in cell culture, ccIIV, egg-free): for age ≥ 6 mos ■ *Flublok* (recombinant inactivated vaccine, RIV, egg-free): for age ≥ 18 years ■ ***Fluzone High-Dose, Fluad:*** for age ≥ 65 years **Live Attenuated Influenza Vaccine (LAIV)** ■ ***FluMist:*** for healthy people age 2-49 years	**Vaccine Timing** Give vaccine as soon as it is available (preferably before October but individuals should still be vaccinated later in the season). Outbreaks usually peak by February. **Live Attenuated Vaccine** LAIV is indicated for healthy patients age 2-49 years. Do not use if pregnant or immunocompromised, or if influenza medications were recently taken (oseltamivir or zanamivir within past 48 hours, peramivir in the past 5 days or baloxavir in the past 17 days). See the previous table with vaccine contraindications and precautions for details.	Store in the refrigerator. Do not freeze. Administer IM except *FluMist*, which is given intranasally as 0.2 mL, divided between the two nostrils. *Afluria:* can be given with a needle-free jet injector.

VACCINE	ADMINISTRATION RECOMMENDATIONS	STORAGE/ ADMINISTRATION
Measles, Mumps and Rubella-Containing Vaccines (Live Attenuated)		
MMR: ***M-M-R II,*** *Priorix* **MMRV** (MMR + Varicella): ***ProQuad*** *ProQuad:* for age 12 months-12 yrs	**Children:** routine vaccine series; 2 doses at ages 12-15 months and 4-6 years. **Adults:** 1 dose if no evidence of immunity. Give 1-2 doses (4 weeks apart), if no evidence of immunity, to: healthcare workers, HIV patients with CD4 count ≥ 200 cells/mm³ for at least 6 months, nonpregnant patients of childbearing age (if no evidence of immunity to rubella), international travelers, household contacts of immunocompromised people and students in postsecondary educational institutions. Do not use if immunocompromised, pregnant. Adults born before 1957 are generally considered immune to measles and mumps.	*M-M-R II:* store in the refrigerator or freezer. *Priorix:* store in the refrigerator. MMRV: store in the freezer (due to varicella component). Store diluents at room temperature or in the refrigerator. Give SC; *M-M-R II* and *ProQuad* may be given IM.
Meningococcal Vaccines **Quadrivalent meningococcal conjugate vaccines (MCV4) include serogroups A, C, W and Y (MenACWY). Serogroup B (MenB) is available in a separate vaccine or in combination with A, C, W and Y (i.e., MenABCWY, a pentavalent conjugate vaccine).**		
MenACWY ***MenQuadfi:*** for age ≥ 2 years ***Menveo:*** for age 2 months-55 years (can be used in adults age ≥ 56 years, if needed)	**Routine Vaccination** Adolescents: 2-dose series at age 11-12 yrs and 16 years. **Special Populations at High Risk** Travelers to certain countries (e.g., African meningitis belt). Proof of vaccination required for travel to the Hajj and Umrah pilgrimages. Age ≥ 2 months: asplenia, sickle cell disease, HIV infection, complement deficiency, use of eculizumab or ravulizumab. Lab workers with *N. meningitidis* exposure. First-year college students living in residential housing, if not up-to-date. Military recruits. The number of doses and timing (intervals) depends on age and specific risk. If ongoing risk revaccinate every 5 years.	Store in the refrigerator. Do not freeze. Give IM. *Menveo:* both vials (the powder and the liquid) contain vaccine; use only the supplied liquid for reconstitution.
MenB: ***Bexsero, Trumenba*** **MenABCWY:** ***Penbraya*** For age 10-25 years (can administer MenABCWY when vaccination against all serogroups is indicated at the same visit)	**Age ≥ 10 Years at High Risk** Asplenia/sickle cell disease, complement deficiency, use of eculizumab or ravulizumab. Lab workers with *N. meningitidis* exposure. During an outbreak. 2 doses (6 months apart). If high risk of meningococcal disease or during an outbreak: give 3 doses (months 0, 1-2 and 6). **Not at High Risk** Age 16-23 yrs: optional (prefer age 16-18 yrs)	Store in the refrigerator. Do not freeze. Give IM. *Penbraya:* the prefilled syringe contains MenB and the vial contains MenACWY; use of both components is required.

PNEUMOCOCCAL VACCINES

The bacteria *S. pneumoniae*, referred to as pneumococcus, is the most common cause of otitis media, pneumonia, meningitis and bloodstream infections in children. Adults age ≥ 50 years and those with certain chronic conditions or altered immunocompetence are also at increased risk of pneumococcal disease.

- There are three pneumococcal conjugate vaccines (PCV15, PCV20 and PCV21) and one polysaccharide vaccine (PPSV23).
- Children age < 5 years receive PCV15 or PCV20 as part of routine childhood vaccinations.
  - Young children (< 2 years) should not receive PPSV23 because they do not produce an adequate antibody response to polysaccharide vaccines.
- Adults should receive one of: PCV20 alone, PCV21 alone or PCV15 followed by PPSV23. The recommended age of administration in adults is based on the presence of underlying medical conditions.

VACCINE	ADMINISTRATION RECOMMENDATIONS	STORAGE/ ADMINISTRATION
Pneumococcal Vaccines		
Conjugate Vaccines: ***Prevnar 20* (PCV20)** ***Capvaxive* (PCV21)** ***Vaxneuvance* (PCV15)**	**Children:** routine childhood series; 4 doses of PCV15 or PCV20 given at age 2, 4, 6, 12-15 mos **Adults (if never received before) age 19-49 years with certain medical conditions (see below) or age ≥ 50 years** PCV20 × 1 or PCV21 × 1 or PCV15 × 1 followed by PPSV23 × 1 ≥ 12 months later (PPSV23 may be given ≥ 8 weeks later if immunocompromised) Specific medical conditions: alcohol use disorder, cigarette smoking, diabetes, chronic heart, lung or liver disease, an immunocompromised state [includes sickle cell disease/asplenia, HIV infection, malignancy, solid organ transplant, chronic renal failure, taking immunosuppressive drugs (e.g., chemotherapy, long-term systemic steroids)] **Other Scenarios** Patients who previously received PCV13 or PPSV23: consult the CDC for guidance on additional doses that may be recommended.	Store in the refrigerator. Do not freeze. Shake the vial or prefilled syringe prior to use. PCV15, PCV20, PCV21: give IM. PPSV23: give IM or SC.
Polysaccharide Vaccine: ***Pneumovax 23* (PPSV23)**	Children age 2-18 years: indicated after PCV15 or PCV20 series completion in patients with select medical conditions. Adults: indicated after PCV15 (see above).	

VACCINE	ADMINISTRATION RECOMMENDATIONS	STORAGE/ ADMINISTRATION
Poliovirus-Containing Vaccines **Only inactivated poliovirus vaccine (IPV) is available in the U.S. Oral polio vaccine (live attenuated) may be administered in other countries.**		
IPV: *IPOL* DTaP-IPV: *Kinrix, Quadracel* **DTaP-HepB-IPV: *Pediarix*** DTaP-IPV / Hib: *Pentacel* DTaP/IPV/Hib/HepB: *Vaxelis*	Routine childhood vaccine series; 4 doses at ages 2, 4, 6-18 months and 4-6 years.	Store in the refrigerator. Do not freeze. Shake the prefilled syringe or vial before use. IPV: give IM or SC.
Rotavirus Vaccines (Live Attenuated)		
RV1: ***Rotarix*** RV5: ***RotaTeq***	Routine infant vaccine series. Do not initiate the series after age 15 weeks. *Rotarix:* 2 doses at age 2 and 4 months. *RotaTeq:* 3 doses at age 2, 4 and 6 months.	Store in the refrigerator. Do not freeze. Give orally.
Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) Vaccines and Antibodies **Prevents RSV-associated lower respiratory tract disease during RSV season in high-risk populations.**		
RSV Vaccines: *Abrysvo, Arexvy, mRESVIA* **RSV Monoclonal Antibodies:** **Nirsevimab *(Beyfortus)*** **Palivizumab *(Synagis)***	**RSV Vaccine** Pregnant people 32-36 weeks gestation during RSV season (September-January): administer 1 dose of *Abrysvo* to prevent RSV in infants < 6 months old. Adults age ≥ 75 or 60-74 years at increased risk (COPD, asthma, heart failure, kidney or liver disease, diabetes, immunocompromised, residence in a long-term care facility): 1 lifetime dose. **RSV Monoclonal Antibody** Neonates and infants age < 8 months born during or entering their first RSV season: administer 1 dose of nirsevimab (if mother not vaccinated during pregnancy). Palivizumab is reserved for select high-risk infants (see the Pediatric Conditions chapter).	*Abrysvo, Arexvy* and antibodies: store in the refrigerator. Do not freeze. *mRESVIA:* store pre-filled syringe in freezer; thaw before administration. Give IM.
Varicella- and Zoster-Containing Vaccines **Varicella virus-containing vaccines are live attenuated vaccines. *Shingrix* is a recombinant (not live) zoster vaccine.**		
Varicella Virus Vaccine (for chickenpox): *Varivax* **MMRV: *ProQuad*** **Zoster Virus Vaccine (for herpes zoster/shingles): *Shingrix***	***Varivax*** Routine series; 2 doses at 12-15 mos and 4-6 yrs Adolescent/adult without immunity: 2 doses Do not use in pregnancy or if immunocompromised. Some antivirals (e.g., acyclovir, famciclovir) interfere with *Varivax* (live vaccine). Stop 24 hrs before administration & do not take for 14 days after. ***Shingrix*** Adults age ≥ 50 years or age ≥ 19 years who are/ will be immunosuppressed: 2 doses at month 0 and 2-6 (2nd dose at month 1-2 if immunocompromised) Vaccinate even if patient previously received *Varivax* or *Zostavax* (live zoster vaccine not available) or has a history of zoster infection; recurrence possible.	***Varivax*** Store in the freezer. Store diluent in refrigerator or at room temp. Reconstitute immediately upon removal from the freezer and administer within 30 minutes. Do not give if there is a hypersensitivity to gelatin or neomycin. Give SC or IM. ***Shingrix*** Store vaccine and adjuvant liquid in the refrigerator. Do not freeze. Give IM.

NON-ROUTINE VACCINES

These vaccines are administered when there is exposure or risk of exposure to a particular infectious pathogen.

DRUG	ADMINISTRATION RECOMMENDATIONS	STORAGE/ ADMINISTRATION
Rabies vaccine: ***RabAvert,*** *Imovax Rabies*	Prevention when there is a high risk of exposure (e.g., animal handlers, traveling to a high risk area): 2 doses. Post-exposure (with previous vaccination): 2 doses. Post-exposure (without previous vaccination): 4 doses + 1 dose rabies immune globulin (RIG) with 1st vaccine dose.	Store in the refrigerator. Reconstitute with the provided diluent. Give IM.
Typhoid vaccine Oral: *Vivotif* (live vaccine) IM: *Typhim Vi* (inactivated vaccine)	To prevent typhoid fever caused by *Salmonella typhi* PO: take 1 capsule on alternate days (days 0, 2, 4 and 6). Complete at least 1 week before possible exposure. Give every 5 years if continued risk or exposure. IM: give 1 dose at least 2 weeks before possible exposure. Give every 2 years if continued risk or exposure.	Oral capsules: store in the refrigerator. Take on an empty stomach (1 hour before a meal) with cold or lukewarm water. Injection: store in the refrigerator. Do not freeze. Give IM.
Japanese encephalitis virus vaccine: *Ixiaro*	Give if spending ≥ 1 month in endemic areas during transmission season, especially if travel will include rural areas. Give 2 doses, 28 days apart. Complete at least 1 week prior to potential exposure (see the Travelers chapter for disease information).	Store in the refrigerator. Do not freeze. Give IM.
Tuberculosis BCG vaccine Live vaccine	Bacille Calmette-Guérin (BCG) vaccine not used in the U.S. Given to infants, children in countries with higher TB incidence.	Can cause a positive reaction to the TB skin test (see the Infectious Diseases II chapter).
Dengue vaccine: *Dengvaxia* Live vaccine	Give to people age 9-16 years who tested positive for dengue & live in endemic areas. Not for primary prevention. Give 3 doses at months 0, 6 and 12.	Store in the refrigerator. Reconstitute with the provided diluent; do not shake. Give SC.
Yellow fever vaccine: *YF-VAX* Live vaccine	Give to those who travel to, or live in, areas of risk or to a traveler to a country that requires it (see Travelers chapter). Contraindicated if severe (life-threatening) allergy to eggs or gelatin, immunosuppressed, age < 6 months, breastfeeding. Avoid donating blood for 2 weeks after receiving the vaccine. The International Certificate of Vaccination (yellow card) is provided and is valid for 10 years, starting 10 days after vaccination. It may be required to enter endemic areas.	Store in the refrigerator. Reconstitute with the provided diluent; swirl, do not shake. Give SC.
Cholera vaccine: *Vaxchora* Live vaccine	Give to people age 2-64 years who are traveling to an area of active toxigenic *Vibrio cholerae* transmission. Give 1 oral dose ≥ 10 days prior to exposure.	Store the packet for reconstitution in the refrigerator. Dissolve buffer packet in 100 mL of cold or room temp water, then add active component packet; stir for 30 secs and drink within 30 mins on an empty stomach.
Smallpox and monkeypox vaccine: *Jynneos* Live vaccine	Give to adults age ≥ 18 years who are at high risk for infection. Give 2 doses, four weeks apart.	Keep frozen. Allow vaccine to thaw and reach room temp before use. Swirl for ≥ 30 secs. Give SC; can administer intradermally if supply shortage (less volume needed per dose).

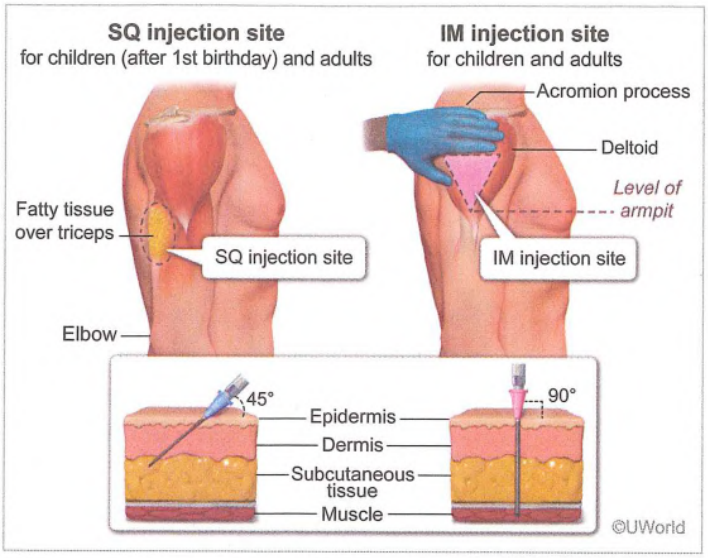
ADMINISTRATION

ROUTES OF ADMINISTRATION

IM ONLY	SC ONLY	IM OR SC	INTRANASAL	PO
Most vaccines	Yellow fever, dengue, smallpox and monkeypox*	*M-M-R II*, MMRV, varicella, PPSV23, IPV	*FluMist*	Typhoid *(Vivotif)* caps Oral solutions: cholera and rotavirus

ADMINISTRATION TECHNIQUE

- Never mix vaccines in the same syringe.
- IM: use a 22 – 25 gauge needle. Inject at a 90-degree angle.
  - ☐ Adults: inject into the deltoid muscle above the level of the armpit and below the shoulder joint.
  - ☐ Infants: inject into the anterolateral mid-thigh muscle.
  - ☐ IM needle length: per ACIP, a 1 inch needle is acceptable for most adults; for males > 260 or females > 200 pounds, a 1.5 inch needle is recommended.
- SC/SQ: use a 23 – 25 gauge, 5/8" needle at a 45-degree angle. Adults: inject into the fatty tissue over the triceps. Infants: inject into the thigh.



IMMUNIZATION INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Immunization information systems are databases that collect vaccination histories and help ensure correct and timely immunizations, especially for children. Healthcare providers can use the registries to obtain the patient's history, produce vaccine records and manage vaccine inventories. They help identify groups who are not receiving vaccines to target outreach efforts. Some systems notify patients if vaccines are needed. Where allowed, pharmacists should report all vaccines administrated to their state or local registry.

STORAGE

Vaccines should be stored on the shelves of refrigerator or freezer units designed for storing biologics (including vaccines); household freezer units or dormitory-style combined refrigerator/freezer units should not be used. Rotate stock, so vaccines and diluents with the earliest expiration date are used first.

Keep vaccines in the original packaging (box) until use; some vaccines require protection from light. Never place vaccines in the doors of the freezer or the refrigerator as the temperature there is unstable. Staff can confuse vaccines in storage. Use labels and separate containers.

Measure refrigerator and freezer temperatures (using a buffered temperature probe) and document at least twice each workday (e.g., in the morning and before the end of the workday). Keep temperature logs for 3 years (or longer, as required by individual states).

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VACCINE STORAGE REQUIREMENTS

- Most vaccines are stored in the refrigerator.
- Some vaccines (e.g., varicella, MMRV) should be stored in the freezer.
- *M-M-R II* is stored either in the refrigerator or freezer.
- Some vaccines require reconstitution before use. The diluents supplied with varicella, MMR and MMRV vaccines can be stored in the refrigerator or at room temperature.
- Reconstituted vaccines should be used shortly after preparation.

Select Guidelines/References

CDC Vaccine and Immunization websites: https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines, https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/acip-recs/ and https://www.cdc.gov/travel (accessed 2025 Feb 21). The pediatric and adult schedules are updated annually and published in January.

The CDC's Pink Book, Epidemiology and Prevention of Vaccine Preventable Diseases (published every 2 years). https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/pinkbook/index.html (accessed 2025 Feb 21).

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CHAPTER 21

TRAVELERS

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= Study Tip Gal = Key Drugs Guy

BACKGROUND

A traveler's risk for contracting disease is assessed based upon travel duration, destination, itinerary and patient-specific health concerns. Pharmacists assist travelers by providing formal advice, travel vaccines, malaria prophylaxis and other medications prior to travel. Consultative services provided by pharmacists can include educational awareness of country-specific risks and ways to prevent and address them.

All travelers should have a list of their medical conditions and medications (prescription and OTC). Travel vaccinations should be documented on the International Certificate of Vaccination or Prophylaxis (ICVP) card, sometimes called the "yellow card." Prescription medications should be stored in the original prescription containers. Medications and medical supplies should be packed in carry-on luggage.

When preparing a patient for travel, healthcare professionals should consider: 1) diseases spread through food and water, 2) diseases spread through blood and bodily fluids and 3) diseases transmitted by insects. CDC's Health Information for International Travel (the "Yellow Book") is available on the CDC website and contains travel health information, including travel health insurance recommendations. Travel advisories and visa requirements can be checked on the U.S. State Department website.

DISEASES TRANSMITTED THROUGH FOOD AND WATER

Contaminated food and water cause many travel-related illnesses. Many international travel destinations (especially developing countries) vary in the availability of clean water, plumbing and refrigeration. These factors can lead to unsafe food handling practices and food and water contamination with fecal matter, leading to an increased risk of illness.

TRAVELERS' DIARRHEA

Travelers' diarrhea (TD) is the most common travel-related illness. Areas of highest risk include most of Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Mexico and Central and South America. TD presents with acute symptoms ranging from mild cramps and frequent loose stools to severe abdominal pain, fever and vomiting. Severity is determined based on the impact on the patient and can be mild, moderate or severe. The severity also determines the initial treatment (see Study Tip Gal on the following page). If blood is mixed in with the stool, it is classified as dysentery, which is often accompanied by systemic symptoms such as fever. Dysentery is classified as severe.

Symptoms usually begin within 6 – 72 hours if caused by a bacterial or viral pathogen. More than 80% of TD cases are bacterial. The primary pathogen is *E. coli*, followed by *Campylobacter jejuni, Shigella* species and *Salmonella* species. Untreated bacterial diarrhea can last 3 – 7 days, and some pathogens can cause invasive infections outside of the GI tract. Persistent TD, defined as diarrhea lasting ≥ 14 days, is more likely to occur with certain bacterial and protozoal pathogens and requires additional testing.

TD PREVENTION

Safe food and water habits can reduce, but do not eliminate, the risk of TD. The rule "boil it, cook it, peel it or forget it" is helpful when discussing food safety. These food and water precautions can be recommended:

- Eat only food that is cooked and served hot. Avoid food that has been sitting on a buffet.
- Eat raw fruits and vegetables only if washed in clean water or peeled (e.g., oranges).
- Use bottled water or boil for approximately one minute before drinking or using to brush teeth. Avoid ice.
- Eating at well-known restaurants can help reduce risk. Poor hygiene practices can increase the risk of contracting TD.
- Keep hands clean and out of the mouth. Wash hands often with soap and water, especially after using the bathroom and before eating. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

Prophylaxis with bismuth subsalicylate (BSS), the active ingredient of *Pepto-Bismol*, reduces the incidence of TD by ~50%. Do not use BSS in patients with an aspirin allergy, pregnancy, renal insufficiency, gout, ulcer, or anyone taking anticoagulants, probenecid or methotrexate. Taking BSS with aspirin or other salicylates can cause salicylate toxicity. BSS is FDA-approved for OTC use in children ≥ 12 years old, but has been used off-label in younger children (≥ 3 years old) as long as they have had no recent or current viral infections (due to the risk of Reye's syndrome). BSS tablets or liquid can be recommended as prophylaxis in any appropriate traveler.

Antibiotic prophylaxis should not be used by most travelers. It can be used by people who are at high risk of developing complications of TD (e.g., immunosuppressed patients or significant comorbidities) or those with travel for performance reasons (e.g., a professional athlete). If antibiotic prophylaxis is indicated, rifaximin is preferred. Alternatives include azithromycin and rifamycin.

TD TREATMENT

Hydration (with increased fluid and salt intake) is essential for all TD cases. In an elderly patient with severe diarrhea or any traveler with prolonged watery diarrhea or vomiting, oral rehydration solution is preferred for fluid replacement. The packets are available in pharmacies throughout the world. They are easy to prepare: mix one packet with one liter of boiled, purified water.

For mild cases of TD, antibiotics are not required. OTC anti-diarrheal drugs can be used to reduce the number of bowel movements, allowing travelers to continue their planned itinerary (e.g., ride on a bus or airplane). The primary antimotility drug used for acute diarrhea is loperamide *(Imodium A-D)*. Loperamide decreases the frequency and urgency of bowel movements. The dose is 4 mg after the first loose stool and 2 mg after each subsequent loose stool, up to a maximum dose of 16 mg/day by prescription or 8 mg/day OTC. Loperamide can be used for self-treatment for up to two days. If symptoms remain after two days, a healthcare provider should be seen. It should not be used in children < 2 years old (< 6 years old if OTC) or in patients with bloody diarrhea.

BSS is another treatment option. The salicylate portion of BSS has antisecretory, anti-diarrheal properties and can reduce stools passed by ~40%.

DRUGS FOR TRAVELERS' DIARRHEA

Prophylaxis

- Bismuth subsalicylate 524-1050 mg PO 4 times daily (with meals and at bedtime)
- Antibiotics (rifaximin preferred)
  - Only used if there is a high risk of complications from TD

Treatment

- Mild TD: loperamide or bismuth subsalicylate
- Moderate TD: loperamide ± antibiotics
  - Azithromycin or a quinolone (if low resistance)
  - Rifaximin is an alternative
- Severe TD (including dysentery): antibiotics ± loperamide
  - Azithromycin preferred
  - Quinolones or rifaximin as alternatives

Compared with BSS, loperamide showed a greater reduction in the number of diarrheal stools passed and has been shown to shorten the duration of acute diarrhea in both children and adults. See the Constipation & Diarrhea chapter for specific information on loperamide and BSS.

Antibiotics shorten the duration of moderate-to-severe TD to a little over 24 hours. Azithromycin, quinolones or rifaximin can be used (typically a single-dose regimen), depending on the TD severity and antibiotic resistance patterns. Azithromycin is preferred for severe TD and dysentery. Quinolones, rifaximin or rifamycin can be used for severe TD if no dysentery is present. Rifaximin and rifamycin cannot be used to treat infections in which invasive pathogens (e.g., *Campylobacter jejuni, Salmonella* species) are suspected.

TYPHOID FEVER

Typhoid fever is caused by the bacterium *Salmonella typhi*. The disease can be life-threatening. The highest risk areas for contracting typhoid fever include East and Southeast Asia, Africa, the Caribbean and Central and South America.

Humans are the only source for this bacteria. Disease is spread through food or water contaminated by the feces of someone with either an acute infection or from a chronic, asymptomatic carrier. The incubation period of typhoid fever and paratyphoid fever (a similar

illness) is 6 – 30 days. Patients present with fatigue and increasing fever over 3 – 4 days. Additional symptoms may include headache, malaise, anorexia, rash and enlargement of the liver and spleen. Intestinal hemorrhage or perforation can occur 2 – 3 weeks later and can be fatal.

Typhoid vaccines are recommended but are only 50 – 80% effective; even vaccinated travelers should follow safe food and water precautions and wash their hands frequently. These precautions are the only prevention method for paratyphoid fever because there is not a vaccine available.

Typhoid vaccines include *Vivotif*, a live-attenuated oral vaccine, and *Typhim Vi,* an inactivated, intramuscular injection. The oral vaccine regimen should be completed ≥ 1 week prior to travel. It should not be used in children < 6 years old, patients taking antibiotics or in those with an extremely sensitive stomach. The intramuscular vaccine must be given ≥ 2 weeks before the expected exposure and is not recommended for children < 2 years old. Revaccination is recommended every five years for *Vivotif* and every two years for *Typhim Vi* in patients who remain at risk.

CHOLERA

Cholera is a bacterial infection caused by *Vibrio cholerae*. The disease is very rare in the U.S., but still occurs in many places including Africa, Southeast Asia and Haiti. The infection is often mild or asymptomatic, but in severe cases, it can present with profuse diarrhea and vomiting, and eventual dehydration that can be life-threatening. The most common symptom includes watery diarrhea, which is referred to as "rice-water stools."

In addition to food and water precautions, a live-attenuated vaccine *(Vaxchora)* is recommended for those traveling to a region with active cholera transmission. *Vaxchora* is administered as a single, oral liquid dose at least 10 days before travel and is approved for use in ages 2 through 64 years.

POLIO

Most people in the U.S. received the polio vaccine in childhood, but the virus is not eradicated worldwide. Many countries remain endemic and have had an active spread of poliovirus in the recent past. These include Afghanistan, Myanmar (Burma), Guinea, Laos, Nigeria, Madagascar, Pakistan and Ukraine. The CDC recommends a single lifetime booster dose of inactivated poliovirus vaccine at least four weeks prior to travel for adults who have previously completed a poliovirus vaccine series and who are traveling to regions where poliovirus is circulating. Travelers might be required to show proof of polio vaccination when leaving a polio-infected country.

HEPATITIS A

Hepatitis A is a common vaccine-preventable infection among international travelers. People from developed countries who travel to developing countries are at the highest risk. The infected patient can be asymptomatic or might have symptoms that include fever, malaise, jaundice, nausea and abdominal discomfort that can last up to six months. Vaccination should be considered for travelers visiting areas with high or intermediate risk, though some experts advise vaccination regardless of destination.

TRAVEL VACCINES

Inactivated Vaccines

Hepatitis A *(Havrix, VAQTA)*

Hepatitis B *(Engerix-B, Heplisav-B, Recombivax HB)*

Hepatitis A/B *(Twinrix)*

Japanese encephalitis *(Ixiaro)*

Meningococcus *(Menveo, MenQuadfi)*

Polio *(IPOL)*

Typhoid-IM *(Typhim Vi)*

Live Vaccines*

Cholera-PO *(Vaxchora)*

Typhoid-PO *(Vivotif)*

Yellow fever-SC *(YF-VAX)*

**Live vaccines are generally avoided in people who are immunocompromised*

DISEASES TRANSMITTED THROUGH BLOOD AND BODILY FLUIDS

HEPATITIS B

Hepatitis B is transmitted through contact with contaminated blood or other body fluids. The risk for travelers who do not participate in high-risk behaviors is low. Hepatitis B has an incubation period of about 90 days. Infection can present as malaise, jaundice, nausea and abdominal discomfort. Chronic infection with Hepatitis B can result in chronic liver disease and liver cancer.

Hepatitis B vaccination is extremely important for travelers who plan to receive medical care, volunteer to provide medical work or have unprotected sexual encounters with new partners. Piercings and tattoos can also transmit the virus and therefore the health risk should be strongly considered if deciding to obtain one. The 3-dose vaccine series takes six months to complete. If a traveler is unable to receive all three doses before departure, administer as many doses as possible before departure and complete the series upon return. In instances of high risk, an accelerated series can be administered; when a 3-dose accelerated series is used, a booster dose is required at one year for long-term immunity.

MENINGOCOCCAL MENINGITIS

Bacterial meningitis involving *N. meningitidis* has a high mortality rate and is a medical emergency. Patients with symptoms of fever, severe and unrelenting headache, nausea, stiff neck (nuchal rigidity) and mental status changes require urgent treatment to avoid the risk of permanent neurological damage and death. Diagnosis is made by a lumbar puncture (LP). See the Infectious Diseases II chapter.

Meningitis is spread by respiratory secretions and is widespread in many parts of the world. Vaccination is recommended for people who travel to or reside in countries where *N. meningitidis* is hyperendemic or epidemic, particularly if spending a long time in contact with the local population. High-risk regions include the meningitis belt of Africa during the dry season (December – June). The government of Saudi Arabia requires the meningococcal vaccine for travel during the annual Hajj and Umrah pilgrimages. Current recommendations include only the quadrivalent vaccines (*Menveo* and *MenQuadfi*) which contain four bacterial types: ACWY. There are no recommendations to use the serogroup B meningococcal vaccines for travelers.

DISEASES TRANSMITTED BY INSECT BITES

Insects that transmit disease are vectors; a vector carries an organism to an individual, causing infection. A reservoir is any place (such as an animal, insect, soil or plant) in which the disease lives and can multiply. The primary insects that transmit infections to travelers are mosquitoes, which transmit Japanese encephalitis, yellow fever, dengue, malaria and Zika virus. The following strategies should be employed to avoid insect bites as much as possible:

- Stay and sleep in screened or air-conditioned rooms and use a bed net, which can be pre-treated with mosquito repellent, such as those listed below.
- Cover exposed skin by wearing long-sleeved shirts, long pants and hats.
- Use proper application of mosquito repellents containing 20% – 50% DEET as the active ingredient on exposed skin. DEET also protects against ticks. Other insect repellents that can be used topically for mosquitoes (but not for ticks) are picaridin, oil of lemon, eucalyptus or IR3535.
- Use permethrin to treat clothing, gear and bed nets but do not apply directly to the skin.

DENGUE

Dengue is transmitted by *Aedes aegypti* and *Aedes albopictus* mosquitoes. In many parts of the tropics and subtropics, dengue is endemic; it occurs every year, usually during a season when mosquito populations are high and rainfall is optimal for breeding. An estimated 75% of infections are asymptomatic, but up to 5% of patients develop severe, life-threatening disease. Severe dengue can include shock, severe bleeding or organ failure. Treatment is supportive, as there are no specific medications to treat dengue infection. *Dengvaxia* is a live-attenuated recombinant vaccine recommended only to those with a past dengue infection or living in endemic areas (e.g., Puerto Rico). Protection from mosquito bites is essential.

JAPANESE ENCEPHALITIS

The Japanese Encephalitis (JE) virus is transmitted by mosquitoes. Infection is usually asymptomatic, but can develop into encephalitis (swelling around the brain) with rigors, seizures, coma and death. Infection risk is highest in rural agricultural areas. The best prevention is to reduce exposure to mosquitoes. The JE vaccine *(Ixiaro)* is sometimes recommended with travel to Asia and parts of the western Pacific for travelers who are planning extended exposure to the outdoors (e.g., campers) or who plan to spend at least one month in endemic areas during JE virus transmission season.

MALARIA

Malaria is transmitted by the *Anopheles* mosquito. Once in a human host, it multiplies first in the liver and then moves into the red blood cells, multiplying and destroying them. Classic symptoms of malaria include shaking, chills, high fever and flu-like illness; these should not be ignored in a patient with recent travel.

Malaria is endemic in Asia, Latin America, North Africa, Eastern Europe and the South Pacific. *Plasmodium vivax* is the most common of four human malaria species *(P. falciparum, P. malariae, P. ovale* and *P. vivax)*. *P. vivax* causes 50% of malaria cases in India and is becoming increasingly resistant to malaria drugs. *P. falciparum* is the most deadly species. About 2,000 cases of malaria are diagnosed in the U.S. annually, mostly in returned travelers. Even with treatment, malaria can be fatal, so prophylactic medications are recommended for travelers to certain regions. The CDC website features maps of malaria presence by country, the species of malaria and resistance patterns. All of this information is incorporated into the CDC's region-specific prophylaxis medication recommendations. Recommendations can change year-to-year.

MALARIA PROPHYLAXIS REGIMENS

Malaria prophylaxis must be started prior to travel and continue after returning (see following tables for specific requirements). Malaria drugs cause nausea; taking with sufficient water, food or milk decreases nausea.

Quick Starts

Daily regimens

Avoid these in pregnancy

Cause nausea; to decrease, take with food, milk or water

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/NOTES
Initiated 1-2 days prior to travel; ideal for traveling with little advance notice		
Doxycycline *(Doryx, Vibramycin)* Also prevents rickettsial infections and leptospirosis; preferred in hiking/ camping	Stop: 4 weeks after travel Taken daily	Causes photosensitivity; use broad-spectrum sunscreen with SPF ≥ 30 **Not used in:** Pregnancy Children < 8 years old (due to tooth development)
Atovaquone/Proguanil *(Malarone)* Good coverage	Stop: 1 week after travel Taken daily	**Not used in:** Pregnancy Breastfeeding Severe renal impairment
Primaquine Most effective drug against *P. vivax*	Stop: 1 week after travel Taken daily	**Not used in:** G6PD deficiency (CDC requires screening prior to use due to risk of hemolytic anemia) Pregnancy Breastfeeding (unless infant is tested for G6PD deficiency)

Advance Starts

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/NOTES
Must be started 1-2 weeks prior to travel		
Chloroquine Resistance issues with *P. falciparum* and *P. vivax*	Start: 1-2 weeks before travel Stop: 4 weeks after travel Taken weekly Patients taking chronic hydroxychloroquine are covered (depending on resistance)	**SIDE EFFECTS** Retinal toxicity/visual changes, exacerbation of psoriasis, serious skin rash (rare), blue-gray skin pigmentation (rare with short-term use) Contraindicated for prophylaxis if underlying retinal or visual changes **Not used in:** Areas of chloroquine or mefloquine resistance
Mefloquine	Start: ≥ 2 weeks before travel Stop: 4 weeks after travel Taken weekly	**Not used in:** Underlying psychiatric conditions Seizures Arrhythmias Areas of mefloquine resistance
Requires a loading dose starting 3 days before travel		
Tafenoquine *(Arakoda)* May be used for up to 6 months of continuous dosing	Loading dose: 3 days before travel, taken daily Maintenance dose: 7 days after last dose of loading regimen Taken weekly Terminal dose: single dose after the last dose of the maintenance regimen	**Not used in:** G6PD deficiency (CDC requires screening prior to use due to risk of hemolytic anemia) Pregnancy Breastfeeding (unless infant is tested for G6PD deficiency) Underlying psychiatric conditions

Weekly regimens

Safe in children, pregnancy

Choice depends on resistance in the region

YELLOW FEVER

Yellow fever is caused by a virus and transmitted by mosquitoes found in tropical and subtropical areas in Africa and Central and South America. Reducing mosquito exposure is essential. Most infections are asymptomatic. If symptoms develop, the initial illness presents with influenza-like symptoms, and can progress to a more toxic form of the disease with shock, bleeding and organ failure. There is no specific treatment for acute infection except symptomatic relief with fluids, analgesics and antipyretics. Aspirin and other NSAIDs cannot be used due to an increased risk of bleeding.

A live-attenuated vaccine *(YF-VAX)* is available to prevent yellow fever and stop transmission. After vaccination, patients are provided an ICVP ("yellow card"), which is required as a condition of entry for some countries. The card is valid beginning 10 days after date of vaccination. A single dose of yellow fever vaccine provides life-long protection and is adequate for most travelers. However, some countries continue to require a booster vaccine dose every 10 years (per previous guideline recommendations). The vaccine is contraindicated with hypersensitivity to eggs and in people who are severely immunocompromised. Due to the risks of serious adverse effects (e.g., neurologic disease), vaccination is recommended only in travelers at a high risk of exposure or who require proof of vaccination to enter a country. Mild adverse effects are common (occurring in 10 – 30% of patients) and include low-grade fever and headache lasting for 5 – 10 days.

ZIKA VIRUS

The Zika virus is primarily transmitted by mosquitoes. Sexual and possible blood transfusion-associated transmission have also been reported. Most Zika virus infections are asymptomatic. If symptoms develop, they are generally mild with fever, maculopapular rash, arthralgia (joint pain) and conjunctivitis (red eyes).

The most pressing concern with Zika virus arose in 2015 when Brazil observed a marked increase in the number of infants born with microcephaly, a birth defect that can cause significant disability and can be life-threatening in severe cases, related to the Zika virus. Zika infection during pregnancy can cause birth defects of the brain and eyes, hearing deficits and impaired growth.

No vaccine is available for the Zika virus. Avoiding mosquito bites and using condoms during sexual contact with people with possible Zika virus infection reduces transmission risk.

The CDC recommends against pregnant women traveling to any area with ongoing transmission of Zika virus. Women who are trying to become pregnant should consult with their healthcare provider prior to travel. Men who have a pregnant partner and have traveled to an area with Zika should use condoms or avoid sex during the pregnancy.

ADDITIONAL CONCERNS FOR TRAVELING INDIVIDUALS

ALTITUDE SICKNESS AND MOTION SICKNESS

Acute mountain sickness (AMS) occurs when people climb rapidly to a high altitude. It occurs commonly above 8,000 feet and is more likely in individuals who live close to sea level and those who have had the condition previously. Symptoms include dizziness, headache, tachycardia and shortness of breath. The primary prophylactic medication is acetazolamide 125 mg twice daily, started the day before (preferred) or on the day of ascent. Higher doses are used for treatment. This can improve breathing, but is not without side effects (polyuria, photosensitivity, taste alteration, dehydration, urticaria and severe skin rashes). Acetazolamide is contraindicated with a sulfa allergy. Sun protection and hydration are recommended. In acute cases of altitude sickness, oxygen, inhaled beta-agonists and dexamethasone are given to reduce cerebral edema.

Motion sickness is common among travelers and is discussed in the Motion Sickness chapter.

VENOUS THROMBOEMBOLISM PREVENTION

Travelers are at increased risk for deep vein thrombosis (DVT) and pulmonary embolism (PE) due to limited movement with long air travel. Wearing compression stockings during long trips reduces risk; these are sold in pharmacies. Travelers should be instructed to stand up, walk and perform lower leg exercises when sitting. Patients should know the symptoms of a DVT and PE and be instructed to seek immediate medical care if suspected. DVT risk factors, symptoms and treatment are discussed in the Anticoagulation chapter.

THE RETURNED TRAVELER

It is imperative that travelers who are ill upon returning home see a healthcare provider and discuss travel specifics, including the itinerary, duration, accommodations, travel activities and any precautions that were taken to reduce infection risk, including vaccination history prior to leaving the U.S.

Some diseases have longer incubation periods and symptoms might not appear for weeks or months. Travelers often return home before their symptoms begin, which can lead to epidemics and the spread of disease from country to country. An example of this is the 2014 outbreak of the Ebola virus in West Africa, the largest Ebola outbreak in history. Ebola is transmitted by direct contact with blood or bodily fluids of a symptomatic person. Symptoms (fever, headache, diarrhea and hemorrhaging) can appear from 2 – 21 days after exposure; an infected person could be asymptomatic when returning to the U.S. and spread the disease before a diagnosis is made. Isolation upon return can reduce transmission.

Select Guidelines/References

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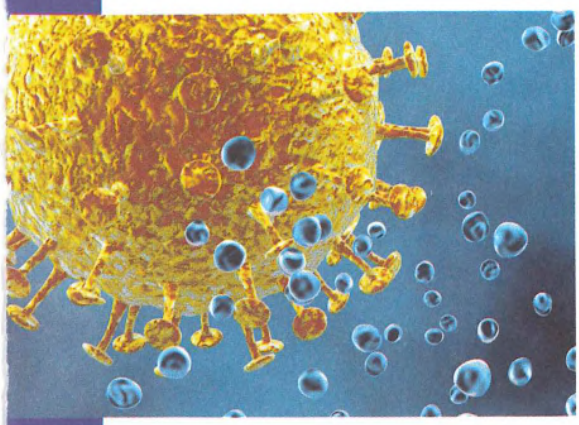
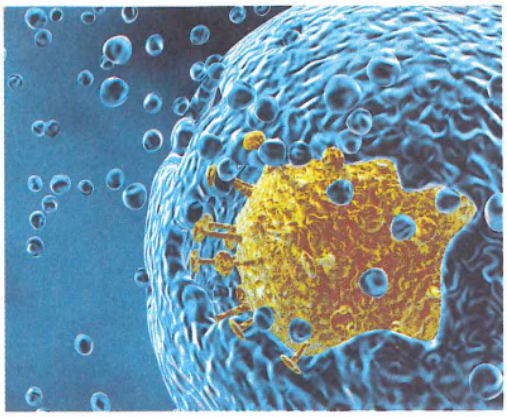
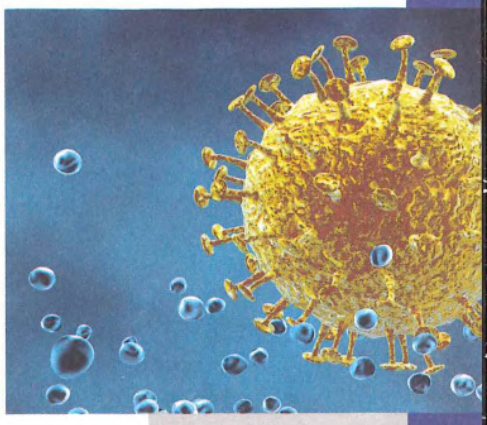
INFECTIOUS DISEASES

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= Study Tip Gal = Key Drugs Guy

BACKGROUND

An infectious disease (ID) is caused by one or more pathogens [viruses, bacteria, fungi, protozoa, parasites and/or infectious proteins (prions)]. Infectious diseases are transmitted through various mechanisms, including physical contact with an infected individual or their body fluids, consuming contaminated food or water or touching contaminated objects. Some conditions are transmitted by airborne droplets and others are spread by a vector (carrier). Transmissible diseases that are spread from person to person are referred to as communicable (i.e., contagious).

HOW TO APPROACH INFECTIOUS DISEASES

Infectious diseases is organized into four chapters:

- ID I covers the principles of infectious diseases and provides summaries of antibacterial drugs by class.
- ID II reviews treatment of bacterial infections.
- ID III discusses antifungals, antivirals and select viral infections.
- ID IV reviews the prophylaxis and treatment of opportunistic infections.

Three primary factors impact treatment decisions in infectious diseases: the bug (pathogen), the drug (antimicrobial) and the patient (host). Do not be tempted to think of bugs, drugs and infectious diseases as separate sections to memorize; they must be considered together.

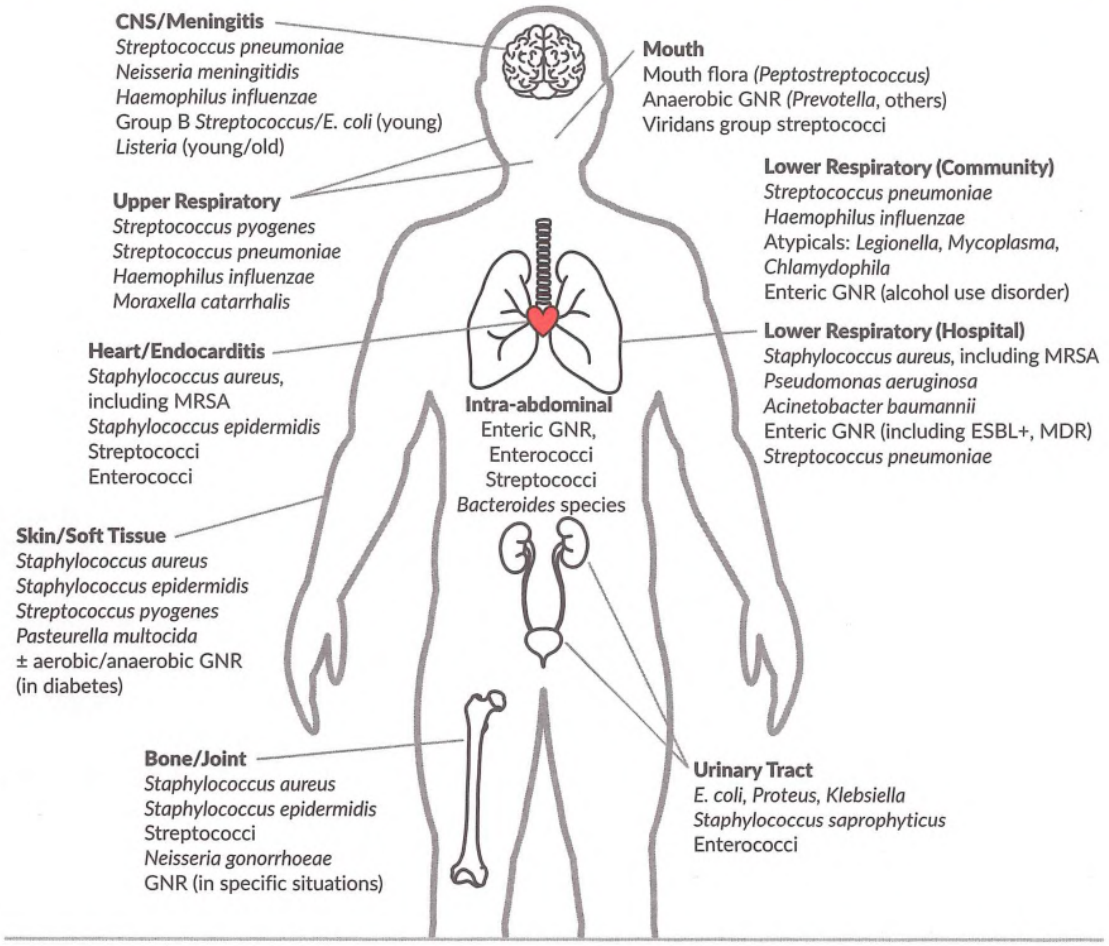
HOW DO I START?

- Recognize common organisms and groups of organisms.
- Focus on resistant organisms and the drugs that treat them.
- Learn the basic spectrum of activity for antimicrobial classes.
- Use bolded drugs, underlined information and Study Tip Gals to identify important points.
- Think about how to assess the patient profile on the exam.

ANTIBIOTIC SELECTION

- The presence of an infection is determined by:
  - Signs and symptoms, including fever, elevated white blood cell count and site-specific findings (e.g., dysuria with a urinary tract infection).
  - Diagnostic findings, such as culture results, X-rays and markers of inflammation (e.g., procalcitonin).
- Empiric antibiotic selection (i.e., starting antibiotics before any test results are available) is based on:
  - The infection site and likely organisms (see image on next page).
  - Infection severity and risk of multidrug-resistant (MDR) pathogens (e.g., community- vs. hospital-acquired infections).
  - Spectrum of activity and expected efficacy in killing the likely organisms, which can be determined by the local antibiogram (described on the next page).
  - Other antibiotic characteristics, including ability to penetrate the site of infection (e.g., achieve adequate concentrations in urine) or risk of side effects.
  - Patient characteristics, including age, body weight, allergies, renal or hepatic function, comorbid conditions, recent antibiotic use, colonization with resistant bacteria, vaccination status, pregnancy status and immune function.
  - Treatment guidelines (e.g., IDSA, CDC), which factor in the criteria above and provide evidence-based recommendations.

COMMON BACTERIAL PATHOGENS FOR SELECT SITES OF INFECTION



CNS = central nervous system; GNR = gram-negative rods; Enteric GNR = *Proteus, E. coli, Klebsiella, Enterobacter, Serratia*;
ESBL = extended-spectrum beta-lactamase; MDR = multidrug-resistant; MRSA = methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*

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ANTIBIOGRAM

An antibiogram is a chart that combines culture data collected from patients at a single institution over a specific time period (usually 1 year). The antibiogram shows susceptibility patterns and can be used to monitor resistance trends over time.

Refer to the example antibiogram on the next page. Bacteria are listed vertically, and drugs are listed horizontally. The numbers inside the table represent the percentage of samples of each isolated organism that were susceptible to the listed drug. The Case Scenario that follows is an example of how an antibiogram is used to select empiric antibiotic treatment.

Hospital Antibiogram Example (Abridged)

JANUARY-DECEMBER	# OF ISOLATES	PENICILLIN	OXACILLIN	AMPICILLIN	CEFTRIAXONE	CLINDAMYCIN	ERYTHROMYCIN	GENTAMICIN	LEVOFLOXACIN	LINEZOLID	TETRACYCLINE	SMX/TMP	VANCOMYCIN
Gram-Positive Organisms (All Isolates)		**Reported as % Susceptible**											
Staphylococcus aureus	1360												
MSSA	830	–	100	–	–	88	78	98§	87	100	93	98	100
MRSA	530	–	–	–	–	78	10	92§	15	100	93	92	100
Streptococcus pneumoniae	42	91	–	–	100	–	79	–	97	–	85	80	100
Enterococcus spp.	663	–	–	93	–	–	–	69§	–	99	–	–	100
Enterococcus faecalis	99	–	–	98	–	–	–	62§	–	99	–	–	87
Enterococcus faecium	164	–	–	10	–	–	–	90§	100	99	–	–	15

§*Synergy only*

CASE SCENARIO

A 77-year-old female is admitted to the general medicine unit from home with confusion, cough, temperature = 101.9°F, respiratory rate = 32 breaths per minute and oxygen saturation = 88% on room air. Her chest X-ray has infiltrates and consolidations, and she is diagnosed with community-acquired pneumonia. An antibiotic regimen that covers *S. pneumoniae* is needed.

After reviewing the institutional antibiogram above, the pharmacist recommends that ceftriaxone be included in the regimen because local susceptibility patterns demonstrate 100% of *S. pneumoniae* isolates are susceptible to ceftriaxone, and use of a third-generation cephalosporin is consistent with national guideline recommendations.

The beta-lactam should be combined with a macrolide or doxycycline. Levofloxacin monotherapy is another option, but the risk of side effects would need to be considered. Vancomycin is generally reserved for cases with MRSA risk.

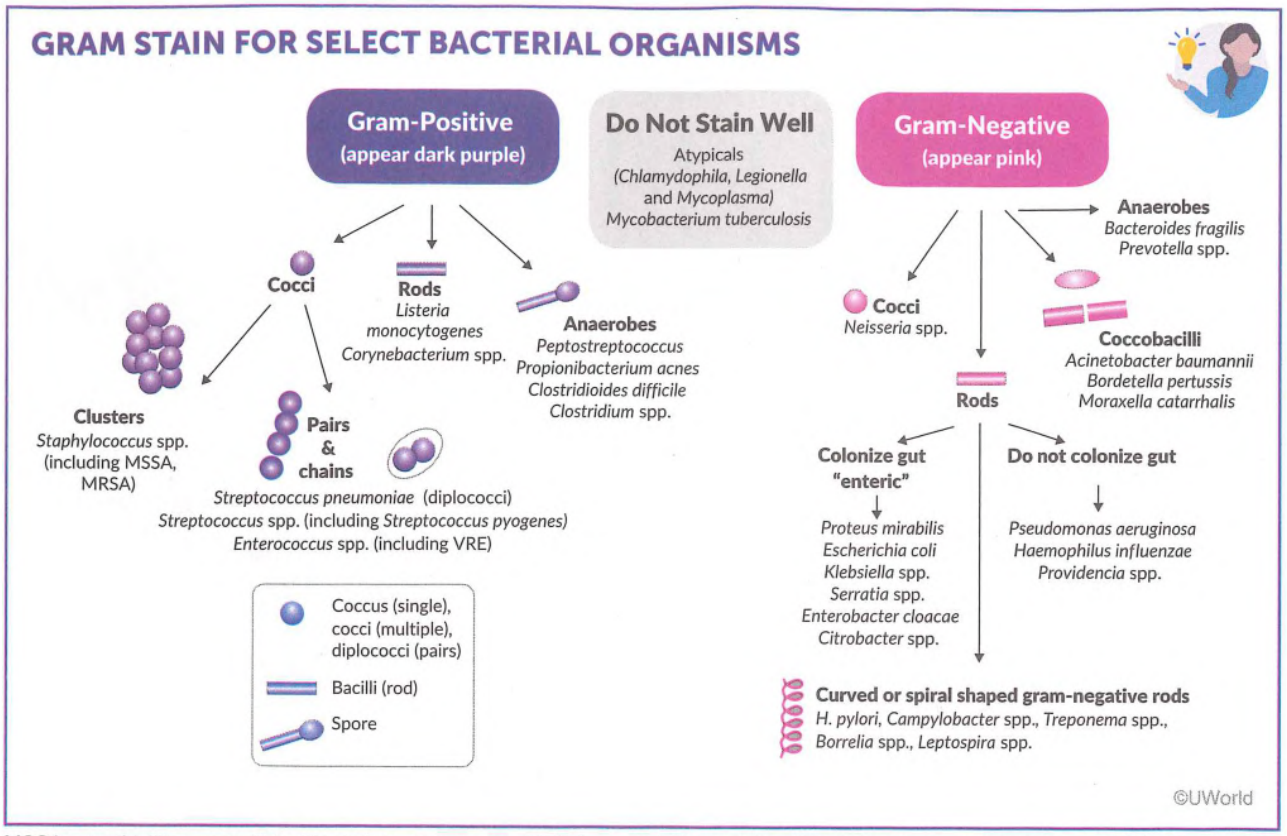
ANTIBIOTIC STREAMLINING

After a fluid or tissue sample is taken from the infection site (e.g., urine, blood, abscess, wound), it is sent to the microbiology lab for Gram stain, organism identification (e.g., culture, PCR) and susceptibility testing. As the results of these tests become available, antibiotics can be streamlined to definitive therapy.

GRAM STAIN

A Gram stain of the collected fluid or tissue sample categorizes the organism by stain result and shape (morphology) (see Study Tip Gal on next page) and provides quick, preliminary results (e.g., gram-negative rods). Although it does not identify the exact organism (e.g., *Klebsiella pneumoniae)*, it narrows the list of potential organisms that may be causing the infection, which provides an opportunity to adjust the empiric antibiotic regimen before the species is identified.

- Gram-positive organisms have a thick cell wall and stain dark purple or blue from the crystal violet stain.
- Gram-negative organisms have a thin cell wall and take up the safranin counterstain, resulting in a pink color.
- Atypical organisms do not have a cell wall and do not stain well.



MSSA = methicillin-susceptible *Staphylococcus aureus;* MRSA = methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus;* spp. = multiple types; VRE = vancomycin-resistant *Enterococcus*

CULTURE AND SUSCEPTIBILITY

The microbiology lab uses various methods to determine which organism is present in a culture sample. For example, lactose (a sugar) can be used to determine the type of gram-negative bacteria that may be present (e.g., *E. coli* breaks down lactose in a unique way, whereas *Pseudomonas* does not).

Staphylococci (gram-positive organisms occurring in clusters) can be differentiated with a coagulase test. *Staphylococcus aureus* is coagulase-positive; other *Staphylococcus* species (e.g., *S. epidermidis)* are sometimes referred to as coagulase-negative staphylococci (CoNS).

Once the organism is identified, susceptibility testing is performed to determine which antibiotics are active against the particular strain. The lab identifies the minimum concentration of each antibiotic that inhibits bacterial growth, which is called the minimum inhibitory concentration (MIC). The MIC is compared to the susceptibility breakpoint to provide an interpretation (e.g., susceptible, resistant); breakpoints are determined by the Clinical & Laboratory Standards Institute (CLSI) using a variety of factors.

CULTURE AND SUSCEPTIBILITY REPORT

The culture and susceptibility (C & S) report is usually available within 24 – 72 hours. It lists the organism and provides susceptibility testing results (see Study Tip Gal on next page). Empiric antibiotics can then be streamlined, which can include discontinuing one or more antibiotics and/or changing to a more narrow-spectrum treatment.

MICs are specific to each antibiotic and organism and should not be compared among different antibiotics. An antibiotic marked susceptible (S) should be selected. Drugs listed as intermediate (I) may be effective under specific circumstances (e.g., higher doses, extended infusions), but usually would not be selected over a susceptible drug. Drugs listed as resistant (R) should not be selected.

EXAMPLE CULTURE AND SUSCEPTIBILITY REPORT

CULTURE & SUSCEPTIBILITY REPORT

BACTERIA
MICRO NUMBER: 053098898
TEST STATUS: FINAL
SPECIMEN SOURCE: URINE
SPECIMEN COMMENTS: AMBER, CLOUDY
RESULT: >100,000 CFU/ML E.COLI

DRUG	MIC INTERPRETATION	MIC (mg/L)
Ampicillin	R	> 32
Ampicillin/Sulbactam	S	< 2
Cefazolin-UTI	S	< 16
Cefepime	S	< 1
Ceftriaxone	S	< 1
Ciprofloxacin	S	1
Gentamicin	S	< 1
Piperacillin/ Tazobactam	S	< 4
Meropenem	S	< 0.25
Nitrofurantoin	S	< 32
Tobramycin	S	< 1
Sulfamethoxazole/ Trimethoprim	R	> 76/4

S = Susceptible
I = Intermediate
R = Resistant

The culture may initially be "pending." It can be updated several times. This culture is finalized.

This culture is from a urine sample.

The organism identified was *E. coli*. "CFU" refers to colony-forming units that grow on the agar plate in the lab. "CFU/mL" quantifies the number of bacterial cells present in the culture.

The "S" in the MIC interpretation column means "susceptible" or "sensitive."

Any of the antibiotics marked "S" could be an effective treatment. Pick the most narrow-spectrum antibiotic that is safe for the patient and adheres to guidelines. Nitrofurantoin is a good choice in this example, provided the patient has no allergies and adequate renal function. If an IV antibiotic is required, cefazolin would be a good choice.

Antibiotics with lower MICs are not inherently better than other antibiotics listed as susceptible (e.g., meropenem is too broad-spectrum and should not be selected in this case).

Ampicillin and sulfamethoxazole/trimethoprim have an "R" for "resistant" in the MIC interpretation column. The *E. coli* is resistant to these antibiotics, so they should not be selected to treat the urine infection.

Empiric Treatment

Select empiric treatment based on the likely organisms at the infection site (e.g., lower respiratory tract, CNS, skin/soft tissue).

Is the patient at risk for MRSA? MDR bacteria? If yes, provide coverage.

Use the antibiogram to guide the treatment selection.

Streamline

Streamline therapy to more narrow-spectrum antibiotics as soon as possible (once gram stain and C & S results are available).

Consider IV to PO conversion if the patient is stable, eating and there is an appropriate oral drug (e.g., that can penetrate the infection site).

Assess the Patient

Monitor for improvement of signs and symptoms. A lack of response can be multifactorial [e.g., inadequate dose, nonadherence, uncontrolled source, resistance, drug interaction, alternative etiology (viral, fungal)].

Determine the duration of treatment; do not continue antibiotics for longer than necessary.

SYNERGY

An infection could require more than one antibiotic for successful treatment. The effect of two antibiotics can be additive (an effect equal to the sum of the individual drugs) or synergistic (an effect greater than the sum of the individual drugs). For example, aminoglycosides and beta-lactams can be used together synergistically to treat certain invasive gram-positive infections (e.g., infective endocarditis); the beta-lactam breaks down the antibiotic cell wall, allowing the aminoglycoside to reach its intracellular target at safe doses.

ANTIBIOTIC RESISTANCE

Antibiotic resistance is the ability of an organism to multiply in the presence of a drug that normally limits its growth or kills it. The CDC estimates that there are ~2,000,000 infections per year where the causative organism is resistant to the usual treatment. These infections are difficult to treat and often require drugs that are costly and/or toxic.

Common mechanisms of resistance include:

- Intrinsic resistance: the resistance is natural to the organism. For example, *E. coli* is resistant to vancomycin because this antibiotic is too large to penetrate the cell wall of *E. coli*.
- Selection pressure: resistance occurs when antibiotics kill susceptible bacteria, leaving behind more resistant strains to multiply. For example, normal GI flora includes *Enterococcus*. When antibiotics (e.g., vancomycin) eliminate susceptible enterococci, vancomycin-resistant *Enterococcus* (VRE) can become predominant.
- Acquired resistance: bacterial DNA containing resistant genes can be transferred between species and/or picked up from dead bacterial fragments in the environment.
- Antibiotic degradation: bacterial enzymes break down the antibiotic.
  - Bacteria that produce beta-lactamases break down beta-lactams (e.g., penicillins) before they can bind to their site of activity. Beta-lactamase inhibitors such as clavulanate, sulbactam, tazobactam and avibactam are combined with some beta-lactams to preserve or increase their spectrum of activity.
  - Extended-spectrum beta-lactamases (ESBLs) are beta-lactamases that can break down all penicillins and most cephalosporins. Because organisms that produce ESBLs can be difficult to eradicate, they are typically treated with carbapenems or cephalosporin/beta-lactamase inhibitor combinations.
  - Carbapenem-resistant *Enterobacterales* (CRE) are MDR gram-negative organisms (e.g., *Klebsiella* spp., *E. coli)* that produce enzymes (e.g., carbapenemase) capable of breaking down penicillins, most cephalosporins and carbapenems. CRE infections typically require treatment with a combination of antibiotics, advanced beta-lactam/beta-lactamase inhibitor combinations (e.g., ceftazidime/avibactam) or polymyxins.

COMMON RESISTANT PATHOGENS

K*lebsiella pneumoniae* (ESBL, CRE)

E*scherichia coli* (ESBL, CRE)

A*cinetobacter baumannii*

E*nterococcus faecalis, Enterococcus faecium* (VRE)

S*taphylococcus aureus* (MRSA)

P*seudomonas aeruginosa*

Remember: **K**ill **E**ach **A**nd **E**very **S**trong **P**athogen

ESBL = extended-spectrum beta-lactamase
CRE = carbapenem-resistant *Enterobacterales*
VRE = vancomycin-resistant *Enterococcus*

CLOSTRIDIOIDES DIFFICILE INFECTION

When an antibiotic kills GI flora (i.e., normal, healthy organisms) along with the targeted pathogens, it can result in an overgrowth of *Clostridioides difficile*, which can produce toxins that inflame the GI mucosa and lead to a *C. difficile* infection (CDI).

Symptoms can be mild (loose stools and abdominal cramping) to severe (pseudomembranous colitis that can require colectomy or be fatal). All antibiotics have a warning for the risk of CDI, but the risk is highest with broad-spectrum penicillins and cephalosporins, quinolones, carbapenems, and clindamycin, which has a boxed warning. When appropriate, antibiotics should be streamlined or discontinued to reduce the risk of CDI.

ANTIMICROBIAL STEWARDSHIP PROGRAMS

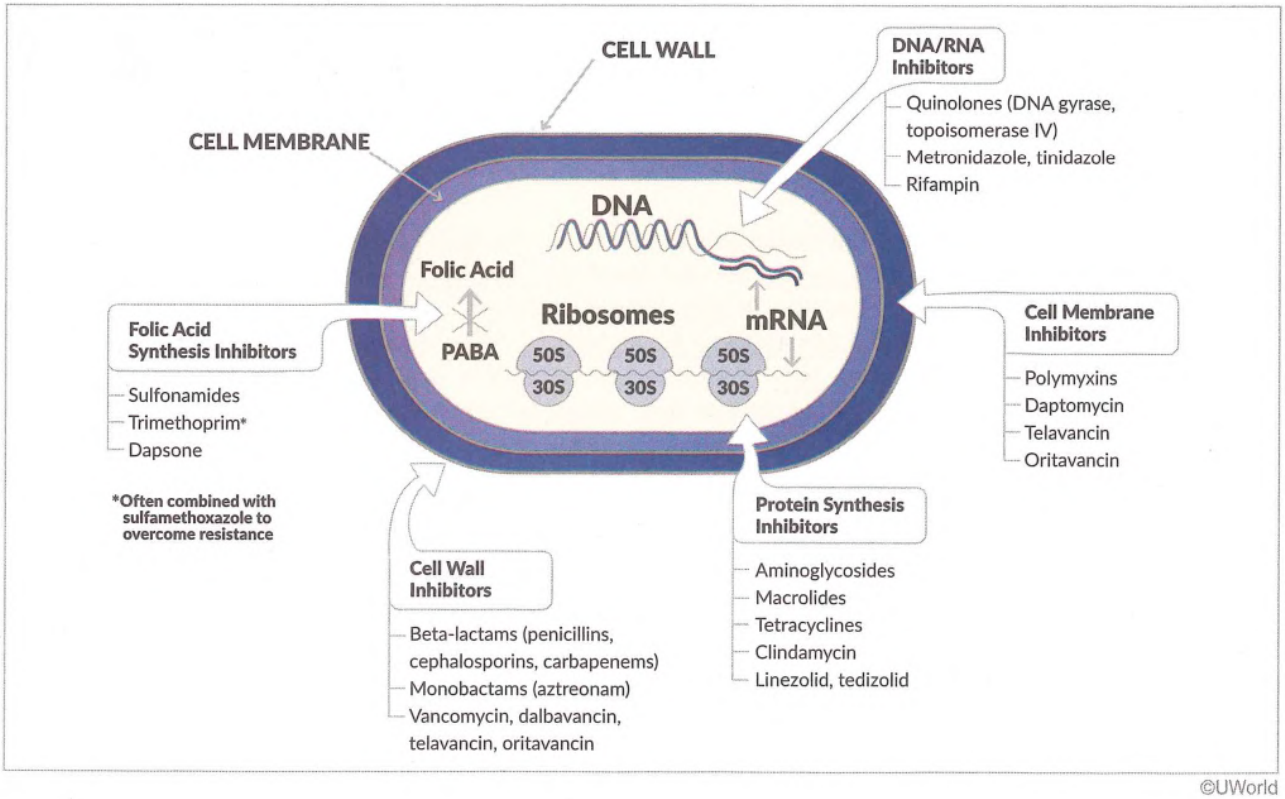
Antimicrobial stewardship programs (ASPs) are designed to improve patient safety and outcomes, limit drug resistance, reduce adverse effects and promote cost-effectiveness.

ASPs consist of collaborative teams (e.g., ID physicians, ID pharmacists, microbiology lab staff, infection prevention personnel) that establish antibiotic guidance for their facility. ASPs conduct audits of prescribing habits and provide education to change suboptimal practices and improve care.

Example ASP interventions include: 1) pharmacokinetic monitoring of aminoglycosides and vancomycin, 2) use of clinical decision support software to rapidly identify pathogens and shorten the time to starting effective treatment, 3) restricted use of select antibiotics (e.g., available only with prior authorization), 4) prospective audit and feedback to prescribers on antibiotic prescriptions and 5) timely transitions from IV to PO antibiotics.

ANTIBIOTIC MECHANISMS OF ACTION

The mechanisms of action of common antibacterials are outlined in the following diagram. Generally, cell wall and cell membrane inhibitors, DNA/RNA inhibitors and aminoglycosides are bactericidal (kill bacteria), while most protein and folic acid synthesis inhibitors are bacteriostatic (inhibit bacterial growth).



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ANTIBIOTIC PHARMACOKINETICS AND PHARMACODYNAMICS

Appropriate selection of an antibiotic regimen requires an understanding of antibiotic pharmacokinetic (PK) principles (absorption, distribution, metabolism and excretion – refer to the Pharmacokinetics chapter) and pharmacodynamic principles (e.g., concentration-dependent or time-dependent killing).

HYDROPHILIC AND LIPOPHILIC DRUGS

Hydrophilicity or lipophilicity of an antibiotic can be used to predict some PK parameters (see figure below).

HYDROPHILIC AGENTS
Beta-lactams
Aminoglycosides
Vancomycin
Daptomycin
Polymyxins

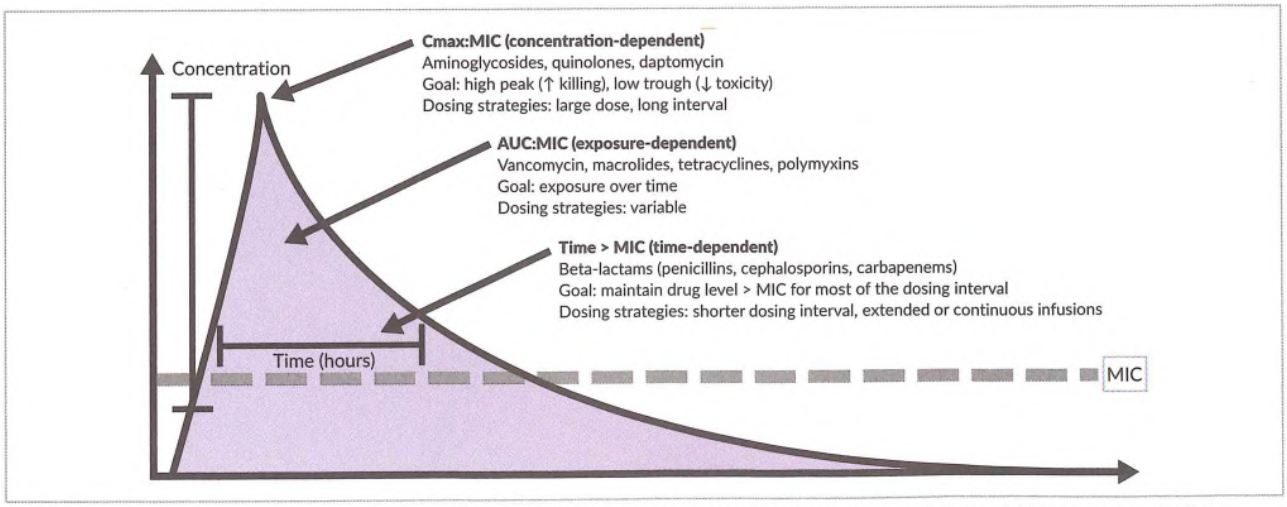
1) Small volume of distribution → Less tissue penetration
2) Mostly renally eliminated → Drug accumulation and side effects can occur if not dose adjusted
3) Low intracellular concentrations → Not active against atypical (intracellular) pathogens
4) Poor bioavailability → IV:PO ratio is not 1:1

LIPOPHILIC AGENTS
Quinolones
Macrolides
Rifampin
Linezolid
Tetracyclines

1) Large volume of distribution → Better tissue penetration
2) Mostly hepatically metabolized → Potential for hepatotoxicity and drug-drug interactions
3) Achieve higher intracellular concentrations → Active against atypical (intracellular) pathogens
4) Excellent bioavailability → IV:PO ratio is often 1:1

DOSE OPTIMIZATION

The pharmacodynamics of select antibiotics are displayed in the figure below. Drugs with concentration-dependent killing (such as aminoglycosides) can be dosed less frequently and in higher doses to maximize the concentration above the MIC. Drugs with time-dependent killing (such as beta-lactams) can be dosed more frequently or each dose can be administered for a longer duration to maximize the time above the MIC. An example is extending the infusion time of beta-lactam antibiotics (e.g., from 30 minutes to 4 hours or administering as a continuous infusion), which has been shown to reduce hospital length of stay, mortality and costs when treating select infections (e.g., pseudomonal pneumonia).



AUC = area under the concentration-time curve, Cmax = maximum plasma concentration, MIC = minimum inhibitory concentration

BETA-LACTAM ANTIBIOTICS

Beta-lactam antibiotics (penicillins, cephalosporins and carbapenems) have a chemical structure that is characterized by a beta-lactam ring (see the Basic Science Concepts chapter). They inhibit bacterial cell wall synthesis by binding to penicillin-binding proteins (PBPs). This prevents the final step of peptidoglycan synthesis in bacterial cell walls.

Beta-lactams are available in multiple formulations, including child-friendly oral formulations (e.g., chewable tablets, suspensions) and injectables (e.g., IV, IM). Knowing the spectrum of activity of the various beta-lactams and which are available in oral vs. injectable form can be useful for the exam (e.g., when converting from IV to PO treatment).

PENICILLINS

As a class, penicillins are not active against MRSA or atypical organisms. Otherwise, activity varies by penicillin subgroup:

- Natural penicillins are active against gram-positive cocci (streptococci and enterococci, but not staphylococci) and gram-positive anaerobes (mouth flora). They have no appreciable gram-negative activity.
- Antistaphylococcal penicillins cover streptococci and methicillin-susceptible *Staphylococcus aureus* (MSSA), but they lack activity against *Enterococcus*, gram-negative pathogens and anaerobes.
- Aminopenicillins cover streptococci, enterococci and gram-positive anaerobes (mouth flora) plus the gram-negative bacteria *Haemophilus, Neisseria, Proteus* and *E. coli* (HNPE). Ampicillin is active against *Listeria*.
  - Aminopenicillins combined with beta-lactamase inhibitors (e.g., clavulanate, sulbactam) have added activity against MSSA, more resistant strains of gram-negative bacteria [e.g., *Haemophilus, Neisseria, Proteus, E. coli, Klebsiella* (HNPEK)] and gram-negative anaerobes *(B. fragilis)*.
- Extended-spectrum penicillins, combined with a beta-lactamase inhibitor (e.g., piperacillin/tazobactam), have broad-spectrum activity. They cover the same organisms as aminopenicillin/beta-lactamase inhibitor combinations (see above) plus have expanded coverage of other gram-negative bacteria, including *Citrobacter, Acinetobacter, Providencia, Enterobacter, Serratia* (CAPES) and *Pseudomonas*.

SELECT PENICILLINS

DRUG*	DOSING
Natural Penicillins	
Penicillin V Potassium	PO: 125-500 mg Q6-12H on an empty stomach
Penicillin G Aqueous *(Pfizerpen)*	IV: 2-4 million units Q4-6H
Penicillin G Benzathine ***(Bicillin L-A)***	IM: 1.2-2.4 million units × 1 (frequency varies)
Penicillin G Benzathine and Penicillin G Procaine *(Bicillin C-R)*	
Antistaphylococcal Penicillins	
Dicloxacillin	PO: 125-500 mg Q6H
Nafcillin	IV/IM: 1-2 grams Q4-6H
Oxacillin	IV: 1-2 grams Q4-6H
Aminopenicillins	
Amoxicillin	PO: dosing varies with formulation
Amoxicillin/Clavulanate ***(Augmentin, Augmentin ES-600)***	PO: dosing varies with formulation; XR tablet is taken Q12H with food
Ampicillin	PO: 250-500 mg Q6H on an empty stomach 30 minutes before or 2 hrs after meals IV/IM: 1-2 grams Q4-6H
Ampicillin/Sulbactam ***(Unasyn)***	IV: 1.5-3 grams Q6H
Extended-Spectrum Penicillin	
Piperacillin/Tazobactam ***(Zosyn)***	IV: 3.375 grams Q6H or 4.5 grams Q6-8H Prolonged or extended infusions: 3.375-4.5 grams IV Q8H (dose infused over 4 hours)

SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING

BOXED WARNING

Penicillin G benzathine: not for IV use; can cause cardio-respiratory arrest and death

CONTRAINDICATIONS

Type 1 hypersensitivity reaction to another penicillin or beta-lactam antibiotic

Augmentin and *Unasyn:* history of cholestatic jaundice or hepatic dysfunction associated with previous use

Severe renal impairment (CrCl < 30 mL/min): do not use amoxicillin/clavulanate extended-release or the 875 mg strength

SIDE EFFECTS

Seizures (with accumulation when not correctly dose adjusted in renal dysfunction), GI upset, diarrhea, rash (including SJS/TEN), allergic reactions/anaphylaxis, hemolytic anemia (identified with a positive Coombs test), renal failure, ↑ LFTs

MONITORING

Renal function, symptoms of anaphylaxis with 1st dose, CBC and LFTs with prolonged courses

NOTES

Antistaphylococcal Penicillins

Preferred for MSSA soft tissue, bone and joint, endocarditis and bloodstream infections

No renal dose adjustments

Nafcillin is a vesicant – administration through a central line is preferred; if extravasation occurs, use cold packs and hyaluronidase injections

Aminopenicillins

Ampicillin PO is rarely used due to poor bioavailability; amoxicillin is preferred if switching from IV ampicillin

Augmentin ES-600 suspension: preferred formulation for acute otitis media treatment in children (lower clavulanate concentration has a lower risk of diarrhea – see ID II chapter)

IV ampicillin and ampicillin/sulbactam is preferably diluted in NS

**Pivmecillinam (Pivya) is a recently approved oral penicillin approved for acute uncomplicated cystitis.*

PENICILLIN DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Probenecid can ↑ the levels of beta-lactams by interfering with renal excretion. This combination is sometimes used intentionally in severe infections to ↑ antibiotic levels.
- Penicillins can ↑ the serum concentration of methotrexate.
- Beta-lactams (except nafcillin and dicloxacillin) can enhance the anticoagulant effect of warfarin by inhibiting the production of vitamin K-dependent clotting factors.
- Nafcillin and dicloxacillin (CYP enzyme inducers) can inhibit the anticoagulant effect of warfarin.

KEY FEATURES OF PENICILLINS

CLASS EFFECTS

- All penicillins should be avoided in patients with a beta-lactam allergy
  - Exceptions: treatment of syphilis during pregnancy or in patients with poor adherence/follow-up – desensitize and treat with penicillin G benzathine
- All penicillins increase the risk of seizures if accumulation occurs (e.g., failure to dose adjust in renal dysfunction)

ORAL

Penicillin VK

- A first-line treatment for pharyngitis ("strep throat")

Amoxicillin

- First-line treatment for acute otitis media (pediatric dose: 80-90 mg/kg/day)
- Drug of choice for infective endocarditis prophylaxis before dental procedures (2 grams PO × 1, 30-60 minutes before procedure)
- Used in *H. pylori* treatment regimens*

Amoxicillin/Clavulanate

- First-line treatment for acute otitis media (pediatric dose: 90 mg/kg/day) and bacterial sinusitis (if antibiotics are indicated)
- Use the lowest dose of clavulanate to ↓ diarrhea

Dicloxacillin

- Covers MSSA (no MRSA)
- No renal dose adjustments needed

PARENTERAL

Penicillin G Benzathine

- Drug of choice for syphilis (2.4 million units IM × 1)
- Not for IV use; can cause death

Nafcillin and Oxacillin

- See dicloxacillin above

Piperacillin/Tazobactam

- Only penicillin active against *Pseudomonas*
- Extended infusions (4 hours) can be used to maximize T > MIC

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*See the Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD) & Peptic Ulcer Disease (PUD) chapter.

CEPHALOSPORINS

The spectrum of activity varies by cephalosporin "generation." Generally, the gram-negative spectrum increases with each generation. As a class, they are not active against *Enterococcus* spp. or atypical organisms.

- First generation: excellent activity against gram-positive cocci (i.e., streptococci, staphylococci) and preferred when a cephalosporin is used for MSSA infections. They have some activity against the gram-negative rods *Proteus, E. coli* and *Klebsiella* (PEK).
- Second generation: covers staphylococci, more resistant *S. pneumoniae* strains plus *Haemophilus, Neisseria, Proteus, E. coli* and *Klebsiella* (HNPEK). Cefotetan and cefoxitin have added activity against gram-negative anaerobes *(B. fragilis)*.
- Third generation: there are two groups.
  - Group 1: includes ceftriaxone, cefotaxime and oral drugs (e.g., cefdinir); they cover resistant streptococci *(S. pneumoniae* and viridans group streptococci), staphylococci (MSSA), gram-positive anaerobes and resistant strains of HNPEK.
  - Group 2: includes ceftazidime, which lacks gram-positive activity but covers *Pseudomonas*.
- Fourth generation: only includes cefepime, which has broad gram-negative activity (HNPEK, CAPES and *Pseudomonas)* and gram-positive activity similar to ceftriaxone.
- Fifth generation: includes ceftaroline and ceftobiprole, which have gram-negative activity similar to ceftriaxone, but broad gram-positive activity; they are the only beta-lactams that cover MRSA.

- Other cephalosporins:
  - Beta-lactamase inhibitor combinations: have a similar spectrum as ceftazidime plus activity against MDR gram-negative rods; includes ceftazidime/avibactam and ceftolozane/tazobactam.
  - Siderophore cephalosporin: cefiderocol uses the iron transport system to enter the gram-negative cell wall. It is active against PEK, *Enterobacter*, *Pseudomonas* and CRE.

DRUG	DOSING
1st Generation	
Cefazolin	IV/IM: 1-2 grams Q8H
Cephalexin	PO: 250-500 mg Q6-12H
Cefadroxil	PO: 500-2,000 mg Q12-24H
2nd Generation	
Cefuroxime	PO/IV/IM: 250-1,500 mg Q8-12H
Cefotetan	IV/IM: 1-2 grams Q12H
Cefoxitin	IV/IM: 1-2 grams Q6-8H
Cefaclor	PO: 250-500 mg Q8H
Cefprozil	PO: 250-500 mg Q12-24H
3rd Generation Group 1	
Cefdinir	PO: 300 mg Q12H or 600 mg daily
Ceftriaxone	IV/IM: 1-2 grams Q12-24H
Cefotaxime*	IV/IM: 1-2 grams Q4-12H
Cefixime *(Suprax)*	PO: 400 mg divided Q12-24H
Cefpodoxime	PO: 100-400 mg Q12H
3rd Generation Group 2	
Ceftazidime *(Tazicef)*	IV/IM: 1-2 grams Q8-12H
4th Generation	
Cefepime	IV/IM: 1-2 grams Q8-12H
5th Generation	
Ceftaroline fosamil ***(Teflaro)***	IV: 600 mg Q12H
Ceftobiprole medocaril *(Zevtera)*	IV: 667 mg Q6H
Cephalosporin/Beta-Lactamase Inhibitor Combinations	
Ceftazidime/Avibactam *(Avycaz)*	IV: 2.5 grams Q8H
Ceftolozane/Tazobactam *(Zerbaxa)*	IV: 1.5-3 grams Q8H
Siderophore Cephalosporin	
Cefiderocol *(Fetroja)*	IV: 2 grams IV Q8H

SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING

CONTRAINDICATIONS (CEFTRIAXONE)
Hyperbilirubinemic neonates (causes biliary sludging, kernicterus)

Concurrent use with calcium-containing IV products in neonates (see Drug Interactions)

WARNINGS
Cross-reactivity with penicillin allergy (< 10%, higher risk with 1st generation cephalosporins): do not use in patients with a type 1 hypersensitivity to penicillin (swelling, angioedema, anaphylaxis)

Cefotetan can cause a disulfiram-like reaction with alcohol ingestion

SIDE EFFECTS
Seizures (with accumulation when not correctly dose adjusted in renal dysfunction), GI upset, diarrhea, rash (including SJS/TEN), allergic reactions/anaphylaxis, acute interstitial nephritis, hemolytic anemia (identified with a positive Coombs test), myelosuppression with prolonged use, ↑ LFTs, drug fever

MONITORING
Renal function, signs of anaphylaxis with 1st dose, CBC, LFTs

NOTES
Ceftriaxone: no renal dose adjustments, CNS penetration at high doses (e.g., 2 g Q12H) when meninges inflamed

Cefixime is available in a chewable tablet

Ceftazidime/avibactam: activity against some carbapenem-resistant *Enterobacterales* (CRE)

Cefiderocol: if CrCl ≥ 120 mL/min, increase dose to 2 grams Q6H

**No longer manufactured in the U.S. A non-FDA approved product is available via importation if needed.*

CEPHALOSPORIN DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Insoluble precipitates may form when ceftriaxone is administered in the same line as calcium-containing IV fluids (avoid simultaneous administration). In adults, these products can be administered at different times of day if the IV line is flushed with a compatible fluid between administration of each product. In neonates, concurrent use (including administration at different times of the day) is contraindicated.
- Drugs that decrease stomach acid can decrease the bioavailability of some oral cephalosporins. Cefuroxime, cefpodoxime and cefdinir should be separated by two hours from short-acting antacids. H2RAs and PPIs should be avoided.

KEY FEATURES OF CEPHALOSPORINS

CLASS EFFECTS

- Although the risk of cross-reactivity is low, do not choose a cephalosporin on the exam if the patient has a penicillin allergy (exception: pediatric patients with acute otitis media and a mild penicillin allergy*)
- Risk of seizures if accumulation occurs (e.g., failure to dose adjust in renal dysfunction)

ORAL

1st Generation: Cephalexin
- Common uses: skin infections (MSSA), strep throat

2nd Generation: Cefuroxime
- Common uses: acute otitis media, community-acquired pneumonia (CAP)

3rd Generation: Cefdinir
- Common use: acute otitis media

PARENTERAL

1st Generation: Cefazolin
- Common use: surgical prophylaxis

2nd Generation: Cefotetan and Cefoxitin
- Anaerobic coverage *(B. fragilis)*
- Common use: surgical prophylaxis (GI procedures)
- Cefotetan can cause a disulfiram-like reaction with alcohol ingestion

3rd Generation: Ceftriaxone
- Common uses: CAP, meningitis, spontaneous bacterial peritonitis, pyelonephritis
- No renal dose adjustments
- Do not use in neonates (age 0-28 days)

Ceftazidime (3rd Generation) and Cefepime (4th Generation)
- Active against *Pseudomonas*

Ceftolozane/Tazobactam and Ceftazidime/Avibactam
- Used for MDR gram-negative organisms (including *Pseudomonas)*

5th Generation: Ceftaroline
- Active against MRSA
- Common uses: CAP, skin and soft tissue infections

**Delayed-onset reaction (> 48 hours after the first antibiotic dose) appearing as a nonpruritic or mildly pruritic, maculopapular rash, but lacking systemic symptoms (e.g., hives, bronchospasm, anaphylaxis) or other serious reactions (e.g., Stevens-Johnson syndrome).*

CARBAPENEMS

Carbapenems are very broad-spectrum antibiotics that are generally reserved for MDR gram-negative infections. They are active against most gram-positive, gram-negative (including ESBL-producing bacteria) and anaerobic pathogens, but provide no activity against atypical pathogens, MRSA, VRE, *C. difficile* or *Stenotrophomonas*.

Ertapenem is different from other carbapenems as it has no activity against *Pseudomonas, Acinetobacter* or *Enterococcus*. Carbapenem/beta-lactamase inhibitor combinations are typically reserved for highly resistant infections (e.g., CRE) that are unable to be treated with a carbapenem alone.

DRUG*	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Meropenem *(Merrem)*	IV: 500-1,000 mg Q8H	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Anaphylactic reaction to beta-lactam antibiotics **WARNINGS** Do not use in patients with penicillin allergy (risk of cross-reactivity) CNS adverse effects, including confusion and seizures; higher risk with imipenem/cilastatin, large doses or impaired renal function **SIDE EFFECTS** Diarrhea, rash/severe skin reaction (DRESS), bone marrow suppression with prolonged use, ↑ LFTs **MONITORING** Renal function, symptoms of anaphylaxis with 1st dose, CBC, LFTs
Meropenem/ Vaborbactam *(Vabomere)*	IV: 4 grams Q8H	
Imipenem/Cilastatin *(Primaxin I.V.)*	IV: 500-1,000 mg Q6-8H	
Imipenem/Cilastatin/ Relebactam *(Recarbrio)*	IV: 1.25 grams Q6H	
Ertapenem *(Invanz)*	IV/IM: 1 gram daily	As above plus:
Stable in NS only		**NOTES** No activity against *Pseudomonas, Acinetobacter* or *Enterococcus*

**Sulopenem etzadroxil/probenecid (Orlynvah) is an oral carbapenem combination recently approved for acute uncomplicated cystitis.*

CARBAPENEM DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Carbapenems can ↓ serum concentrations of valproic acid, leading to a loss of seizure control.
- Use with caution in patients with a history of seizure disorder, or in combination with other drugs known to lower the seizure threshold (e.g., clozapine, quinolones, bupropion, tramadol). See the Seizures/Epilepsy chapter.

CASE SCENARIO

Think of how you would approach a case on the exam in which one of the answer choices is ertapenem 1 gram IV Q24H. Assess the following, using the underlined information in the carbapenem drug table:

- Allergies: if the patient has a penicillin allergy, there is likely a better answer choice because of the possibility of cross-reactivity.
- Culture and susceptibility: if the culture is growing ESBL-positive *E. coli*, ertapenem may be a good choice. If *Pseudomonas* is growing, ertapenem can be ruled out based on a lack of activity against this pathogen.
- Past medical history and medication profile: if the patient has a history of seizures or takes an antiseizure drug, such as phenytoin, there is likely a better choice than a carbapenem, which can increase the risk for seizures.

KEY FEATURES OF CARBAPENEMS

Class Effects

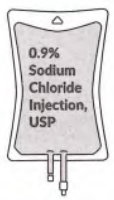
- All active against ESBL-producing organisms and (except ertapenem) *Pseudomonas*
- Do not use with penicillin allergy
- Seizure risk (with ↑ doses, failure to dose adjust in renal dysfunction or use of imipenem/cilastatin)

Organisms Not Covered

- Atypicals, VRE, MRSA, *C. difficile, Stenotrophomonas*
- **ErtAP**enem does not cover **PEA:** *Pseudomonas, Enterococcus, Acinetobacter*

Common Uses

- Polymicrobial infections (e.g., severe diabetic foot infection)
- Empiric therapy when resistant organisms are suspected
- ESBL-positive infections
- Resistant *Pseudomonas* or *Acinetobacter* infections (except ertapenem)



Ertapenem must be diluted in normal saline.

MONOBACTAM

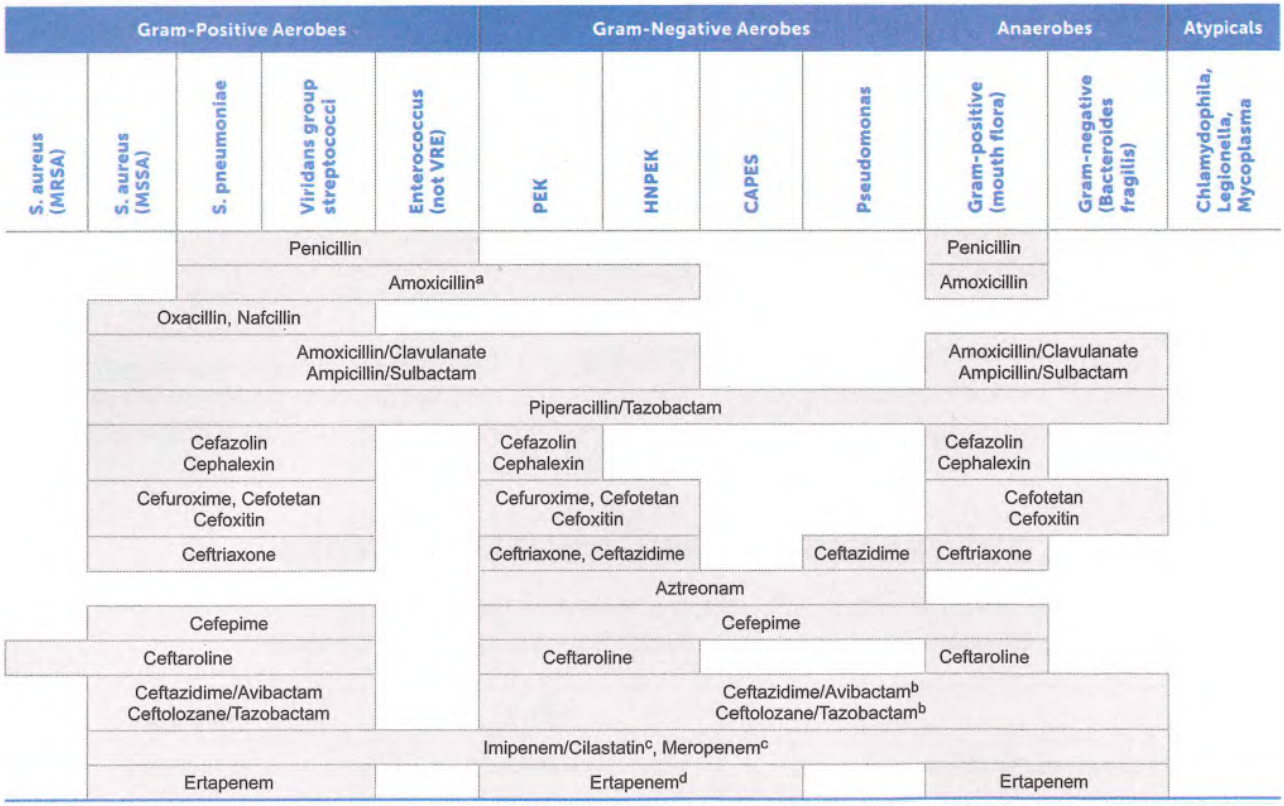
AZTREONAM

Aztreonam has a mechanism of action similar to beta-lactams; it inhibits bacterial cell wall synthesis by binding to penicillin-binding proteins (PBPs), which prevents the final step of peptidoglycan synthesis in bacterial cell walls. Aztreonam covers many gram-negative organisms, including *Pseudomonas* and CAPES. It has no gram-positive or anaerobic activity. The monobactam structure makes cross-reactivity with a beta-lactam unlikely, therefore aztreonam is primarily used when a beta-lactam allergy is present.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Aztreonam *(Azactam)* Injection *Cayston* – inhaled, for cystic fibrosis	IV: 500-2,000 mg Q6-12H CrCl < 30 mL/min: dose adjustment required	**SIDE EFFECTS** Similar to penicillins, including rash, N/V/D, ↑ LFTs **NOTES** Can be used with a penicillin allergy

BETA-LACTAM ANTIBIOTICS SPECTRUM OF ACTIVITY SUMMARY

The chart below provides a visual representation of the general spectrum of activity for select beta-lactams and aztreonam. It can be used to identify antibiotics that have activity against common pathogens, unique coverage (e.g., active against *Pseudomonas* or MRSA) or a lack of coverage (e.g., not active against *Enterococcus).*



[a]*No Klebsiella coverage*
[b]*Must be given with metronidazole for adequate anaerobic coverage*
[c]*E. faecalis only*
[d]*No Acinetobacter coverage*

MRSA = methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus;* MSSA = methicillin-susceptible *Staphylococcus aureus;* VRE = vancomycin-resistant *Enterococcus;* PEK = *Proteus, E. coli, Klebsiella;* HNPEK = *Haemophilus, Neisseria, Proteus, E. coli, Klebsiella;* CAPES = *Citrobacter, Acinetobacter, Providencia, Enterobacter, Serratia;* mouth flora = *Peptostreptococcus*

AMINOGLYCOSIDES

Aminoglycosides bind to the ribosome, which interferes with bacterial protein synthesis and results in a defective bacterial cell membrane. They are active against gram-negative bacteria, including *Pseudomonas* (primarily tobramycin) and are typically used as part of an empiric regimen with other antibiotics (not as monotherapy). Gentamicin and streptomycin are used for synergy, in combination with a beta-lactam or vancomycin, when treating gram-positive infections (e.g., enterococcal endocarditis).

There are two dosing strategies for aminoglycosides. Traditional dosing uses lower doses more frequently (e.g., Q8H if normal renal function). Extended interval dosing uses higher doses (to attain higher peaks) less frequently (e.g., Q24H if normal renal function). With extended interval dosing, bacterial killing is improved (i.e., more likely to achieve Cmax:MIC) and the risk of nephrotoxicity is lower.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/ MONITORING
Gentamicin IV, IM, ophthalmic, topical **Tobramycin** IV, IM, ophthalmic, inhaled Tobramycin inhalation for CF *(Tobi, Tobi Podhaler, Kitabis Pak, Bethkis)* **Amikacin** IV, IM Streptomycin IM Plazomicin *(Zemdri)* IV	If underweight (< ideal body weight): use total body weight (TBW) If normal weight (not obese or underweight): ideal body weight or TBW can be used If obese, use adjusted body weight (see the Calculations IV chapter for details) **Traditional IV Dosing** Gentamicin and tobramycin: 1-2.5 mg/kg/dose; lower doses (1 mg/kg) for synergy in gram-positive infections; higher doses for gram-negative infections Amikacin: 5-7.5 mg/kg/dose **Renal Dose Adjustments (Traditional Dosing)** CrCl ≥ 60 mL/min: Q8H CrCl 40-60 mL/min: Q12H CrCl 20-40 mL/min: Q24H CrCl < 20 mL/min: 1× dose, then dose per levels **Extended Interval IV Dosing** Gentamicin and tobramycin: 4-7 mg/kg/dose Amikacin: 15-20 mg/kg/dose Frequency (see Monitoring section)	**BOXED WARNINGS** Nephrotoxicity, ototoxicity (hearing loss, vertigo, ataxia), neuromuscular blockade and respiratory paralysis, avoid with other neurotoxic/nephrotoxic drugs, fetal harm if given in pregnancy **WARNINGS** Caution with impaired renal function, in older adults, and those taking other nephrotoxic drugs (amphotericin B, cisplatin, polymyxins, loop diuretics, cyclosporine, NSAIDs, radiocontrast dye, tacrolimus, vancomycin) **MONITORING** Drug levels, renal function, urine output, hearing tests Traditional dosing: draw a trough level immediately (or 30 minutes) before the 4th dose; draw a peak level 30 minutes after the end of the 30-minute infusion for the 4th dose (see table below for target peaks and troughs) Extended interval dosing: draw a random level and plot on the nomogram (see example on next page) to determine dosing frequency

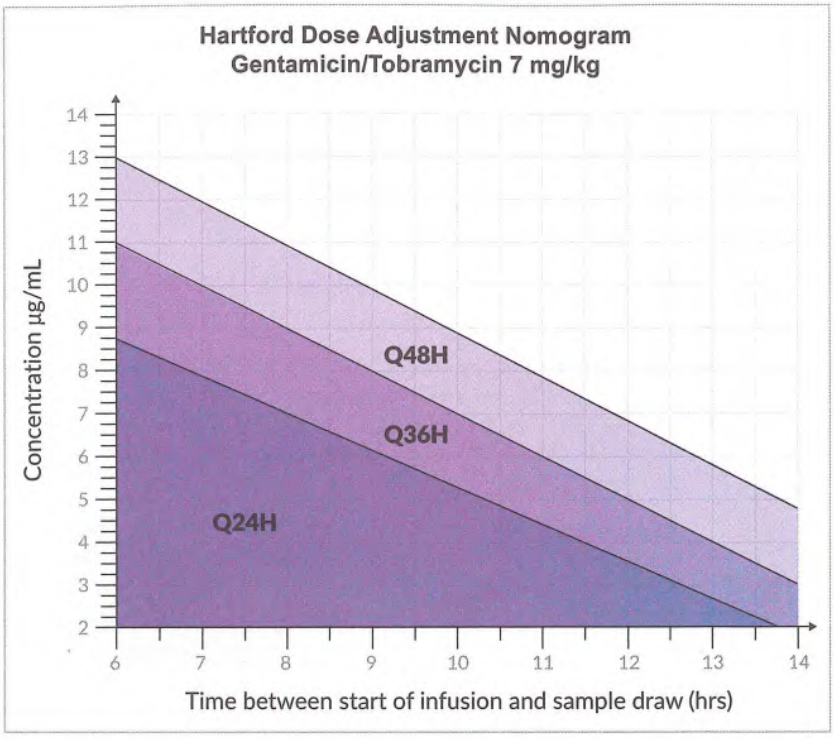
TRADITIONAL DOSING: TARGET DRUG CONCENTRATIONS

Peak and trough levels are drawn with the 4th aminoglycoside dose (see Monitoring section of drug table above) and are compared to the goal levels below to determine if dose adjustments are needed.

DRUG	PEAK	TROUGH
Gentamicin, gram-positive infection (synergy)	3-4 mcg/mL	< 1 mcg/mL
Gentamicin, gram-negative infection	5-10 mcg/mL	< 2 mcg/mL
Tobramycin		
Amikacin	20-30 mcg/mL	< 5 mcg/mL

EXTENDED INTERVAL DOSING NOMOGRAM

With extended interval dosing, a random level is drawn after the first dose (the timing depends on the nomogram; the Hartford nomogram below uses a window of 6 – 14 hours after the start of the infusion). The level is then plotted on the nomogram to find the dosing interval (see Case Scenario). If the level plots on a line, round up to the next dosing interval to avoid potential toxicity.



CASE SCENARIO

PR, a 56-year-old female (height: 5'4", weight: 79 kg), is prescribed extended-interval tobramycin. The pharmacy aminoglycoside dosing protocol includes the Hartford nomogram method for dosing.

First, calculate the initial tobramycin dose.

- Determine which weight to use: since PR's TBW (79 kg) is > 120% of her IBW (54.7 kg), adjusted body weight (64.4 kg) should be used.
- Calculate the initial dose: 7 mg/kg × 64.4 kg = ~450 mg.

Next, determine the frequency of dosing.

- A random tobramycin level drawn 10 hours after the start of the 450 mg infusion is 6 mcg/mL.
- When plotted on the nomogram, the lines meet in the Q36H section, so the dose should be 450 mg IV Q36H.

KEY FEATURES OF AMINOGLYCOSIDES

Class Effects

- Kill gram-negative bacteria (including *Pseudomonas)*
- Synergistic for gram-positive organisms (when combined with a beta-lactam or vancomycin)
- Concentration-dependent activity
- Post-antibiotic effect (killing continues after the serum level drops below the MIC)

Risks

- Nephrotoxicity
- Ototoxicity (hearing loss, tinnitus, balance problems); may be irreversible

Dosing Strategy

- Extended-interval dosing takes advantage of the concentration-dependent kinetics → give larger doses less frequently → this gives the kidneys time to recover between doses

QUINOLONES

Quinolones inhibit bacterial DNA topoisomerase IV and DNA gyrase (topoisomerase II); this prevents supercoiling of DNA, leading to breakage of double-stranded DNA. Quinolones have concentration-dependent antibacterial activity and a broad-spectrum of activity against gram-negative (e.g., *E. coli*), gram-positive and atypical pathogens. Some notable distinctions in the class include:

- Levofloxacin and moxifloxacin are "respiratory quinolones" due to enhanced coverage of *S. pneumoniae*.
- Ciprofloxacin and levofloxacin have enhanced gram-negative activity, including coverage of *Pseudomonas*.
- Moxifloxacin has anaerobic activity and can be used alone for polymicrobial (e.g., intra-abdominal) infections.
- Delafloxacin is active against MRSA and is the preferred quinolone if treating skin infections suspected to be caused by MRSA. Other quinolones should be avoided due to high rates of MRSA resistance.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Ciprofloxacin ***(Cipro)*** Tablet, suspension, injection Ophthalmic: *Ciloxan* Otic: *Cetraxal* Otic combinations: + dexamethasone ***(Ciprodex)*** + fluocinolone *(Otovel)* + hydrocortisone *(Cipro HC)*	PO: 250-750 mg Q12H IV: 200-400 mg Q8-12H CrCl < 30 mL/min: Q18-24H	**BOXED WARNINGS** Tendon inflammation and/or rupture (often in Achilles tendon); can occur within hours/days of starting or up to several months after treatment completion; ↑ risk in organ transplant recipients, age > 60 years and with concurrent use of systemic steroids; discontinue immediately if symptoms occur Peripheral neuropathy; can last months to years after drug discontinuation and may become permanent; discontinue immediately if symptoms occur CNS effects (seizures, tremor, restlessness, confusion, hallucinations, depression, suicidal thoughts, paranoia, nightmares, insomnia, ↑ intracranial pressure); use caution in patients with CNS disorders or with drugs that cause seizures or lower the seizure threshold (see Seizures/Epilepsy chapter) Avoid with myasthenia gravis (may worsen muscle weakness) **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Ciprofloxacin: concurrent administration of tizanidine **WARNINGS** QT prolongation (highest risk with moxifloxacin > levofloxacin > ciprofloxacin); avoid in patients with known QT prolongation, or those with additive risks (hypokalemia, use of other drugs that prolong the QT interval – see the Arrhythmias chapter) Hypoglycemia and hyperglycemia Psychiatric disturbances (agitation, disorientation, lack of attention, nervousness, memory impairment, delirium) Avoid systemic quinolone in children, pregnancy, breastfeeding: risk of musculoskeletal toxicity Aortic aneurysm/dissection (↑ risk with longer treatment duration, older age or history of aneurysm) Photosensitivity, hepatotoxicity, crystalluria (stay hydrated) **SIDE EFFECTS** Nausea/diarrhea, HA, dizziness, skin reactions (SJS/TEN) **NOTES** Ciprofloxacin oral suspension: shake vigorously for 15 seconds before each dose; do not put through an NG or other feeding tube (the oil-based suspension adheres to tubing) Do not use moxifloxacin for UTI (does not concentrate in urine)
Levofloxacin Tablet, solution, injection	PO/IV: 250-750 mg daily CrCl < 50 mL/min: Q48H and/or ↓ dose	
Moxifloxacin *(Avelox)* Tablet, injection Ophthalmic: *Vigamox*	IV/PO: 400 mg Q24H No renal dose adjustments	
Delafloxacin *(Baxdela)* Tablet, injection	PO: 450 mg Q12H IV: 300 mg Q12H eGFR 15-29 mL/min/1.73 m^2: dose adjustment required (IV only) eGFR < 15 mL/min/1.73 m^2: not recommended	
Gatifloxacin *(Zymaxid* eye drops)	No oral or injectable formulations	
Ofloxacin ***(Ocuflox*** eye drops) Tablet, ophthalmic, otic	PO: 200-400 mg Q12H CrCl ≤ 50 mL/min: dose adjustment required	

QUINOLONE DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Antacids and other polyvalent cations (e.g., iron, magnesium, aluminum, phosphate, calcium, zinc), multivitamins, sucralfate and bile acid resins can chelate and inhibit quinolone absorption and should not be taken at the same time (separate administration). When immediate-release ciprofloxacin tablets are crushed and mixed with water for administration via a feeding tube, hold tube feedings at least 1 hour before and 2 hours after the dose.
- The phosphate binders lanthanum carbonate and sevelamer can ↓ the serum concentration of oral quinolones; separate administration.
- Quinolones can ↑ the effects of warfarin.
- Quinolones can ↑ the effects of sulfonylureas, insulin and other hypoglycemic drugs.
- Caution with CVD, ↓ potassium and magnesium and with other QT-prolonging drugs (e.g., azole antifungals, antipsychotics, methadone, macrolides).
- Probenecid and NSAIDs can ↑ quinolone levels.
- Ciprofloxacin is a strong CYP1A2 inhibitor and a weak CYP3A4 inhibitor; ciprofloxacin can ↑ levels of caffeine, theophylline and tizanidine.

KEY FEATURES OF QUINOLONES

Common Uses
- Varies by agent: pneumonia, UTIs, intra-abdominal infections, travelers' diarrhea
- Use last-line for acute bacterial sinusitis, acute exacerbation of chronic bronchitis and uncomplicated UTIs

Respiratory Quinolones
- Levofloxacin, moxifloxacin
- Reliable *S. pneumoniae* activity (in pneumonia)

Antipseudomonal Quinolones
- Ciprofloxacin, levofloxacin

Moxifloxacin
- Only quinolone that is not renally adjusted; do not use for UTIs

IV to PO Ratio 1:1
- Levofloxacin and moxifloxacin

Profile Review Tips
- Caution with CVD, ↓ K/Mg and with other QT-prolonging drugs (e.g., azole antifungals, antipsychotics, methadone, macrolides)
- Avoid in patients with a seizure history or if using antiseizure drugs
- Avoid in children

Counseling
- Avoid sun exposure, separate from polyvalent cations, monitor blood glucose (in diabetes)
- Watch for tendon rupture, neuropathy, CNS or psychiatric side effects

MACROLIDES

Macrolides bind to the 50S ribosomal subunit, resulting in inhibition of protein synthesis. They have excellent coverage of atypicals *(Legionella, Chlamydophila, Mycoplasma)*, *Mycobacterium avium* complex and *Bordetella pertussis*, and also cover *S. pneumoniae, Haemophilus* and *Moraxella,* although these organisms have increasing rates of resistance to macrolides. Macrolides are commonly used for community-acquired upper and lower respiratory tract infections.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Azithromycin *(Zithromax, Z-Pak,* *Zithromax Tri-Pak, AzaSite* eye drops) Tablet, suspension, injection, ophthalmic	*Z-Pak:* 500 mg on day 1, then 250 mg on days 2-5 *Tri-Pak:* 500 mg daily for 3 days IV: 250-500 mg daily No renal dose adjustments	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Cholestatic jaundice/hepatic dysfunction with prior use Clarithromycin and erythromycin: do not use with lovastatin or simvastatin, pimozide, ergotamine or dihydroergotamine Clarithromycin: concurrent use with colchicine in patients with renal or hepatic impairment **WARNINGS** QT prolongation (highest risk with erythromycin > azithromycin > clarithromycin); avoid in patients with known QT prolongation, or those with additive risks (hypokalemia, use of other drugs that prolong the QT interval – see the Arrhythmias chapter) Hepatotoxicity; use caution in patients with liver disease Exacerbation of myasthenia gravis Clarithromycin: caution with CAD (↑ mortality ≥ 1 year after the end of a 2-week course of treatment) **SIDE EFFECTS** GI upset (diarrhea, abdominal pain, cramping), taste perversion, ototoxicity (rare, reversible), severe (but rare) skin reactions (SJS/TEN/DRESS)
Clarithromycin Tablet, suspension	PO: 250-500 mg Q12H or 1 gram (ER tablet) daily CrCl < 30 mL/min: dose adjustment required	
Erythromycin *(E.E.S., Ery-Tab, Erythrocin,* *EryPed, Erygel* topical) Capsule, tablet, suspension, injection, ophthalmic, topical E.E.S = erythromycin ethylsuccinate	Dosing varies by product E.E.S 400 mg = 250 mg erythromycin base or stearate No renal dose adjustments required	

MACROLIDE DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Erythromycin and clarithromycin are major CYP3A4 substrates and CYP3A4 inhibitors (erythromycin is moderate, clarithromycin is strong). Some medications metabolized by CYP3A4 (e.g., simvastatin, lovastatin) are contraindicated in combination with these macrolides, and others may require close monitoring or should be used with caution. Some examples include apixaban, colchicine, dabigatran, rivaroxaban, theophylline and warfarin. Refer to the Drug Interactions chapter.
- Azithromycin is a minor substrate of CYP3A4 and a weak inhibitor of CYP1A2 and P-gp; it has fewer clinically significant drug interactions than other macrolides.
- All macrolides: use caution with CVD, ↓ potassium and magnesium and with other QT-prolonging drugs (e.g., azole antifungals, antipsychotics, methadone, quinolones).

KEY FEATURES OF MACROLIDES

Common Uses

- All macrolides: CAP, alternative to a beta-lactam for pharyngitis ("strep throat")
- Azithromycin: COPD exacerbations, pertussis, chlamydia (in pregnant patients), prophylaxis for *Mycobacterium avium* complex, severe travelers' diarrhea (including dysentery)
- Erythromycin ↑ gastric motility and is used for gastroparesis

Common Azithromycin Dosing

- Two 250 mg tablets × 1, then 250 mg daily × 4 days

QT Prolongation

- Caution with CVD, ↓ K/Mg and other QT-prolonging drugs (e.g., azole antifungals, antipsychotics, methadone, quinolones)

Drug Interactions

- Clarithromycin and erythromycin are CYP3A4 inhibitors; lovastatin and simvastatin are contraindicated (↑ risk of muscle toxicity)

TETRACYCLINES

Tetracyclines inhibit bacterial protein synthesis by reversibly binding to the 30S ribosomal subunit. They cover many gram-positive bacteria (staphylococci, streptococci, enterococci, *Propionibacterium* spp.), gram-negative bacteria, including respiratory flora *(Haemophilus, Moraxella,* atypicals) and other unique pathogens (e.g., *Rickettsiae, Bacillus anthracis, Treponema pallidum,* other spirochetes).

Doxycycline has broader indications than the other tetracyclines, including respiratory tract infections (e.g., CAP), tickborne/rickettsial diseases and sexually transmitted infections (e.g., chlamydia). Doxycycline is an option for the treatment of mild CA-MRSA skin infections and VRE urinary tract infections.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Doxycycline *(Vibramycin, Doryx, Oracea)* Capsule, tablet, syrup, suspension, injection	PO/IV: 100-200 mg daily in 1-2 divided doses Take with food to ↓ GI irritation (except take *Oracea* on an empty stomach) No renal dose adjustments required	**WARNINGS** Children age < 8 yrs, pregnancy, breastfeeding (suppresses bone growth and skeletal development; permanently discolors teeth) Photosensitivity, tissue hyperpigmentation, severe skin reactions (DRESS/SJS/TEN), exfoliative dermatitis GI inflammation/ulceration (see Notes section) Minocycline: drug-induced lupus erythematosus (DILE) **SIDE EFFECTS** N/V/D, rash **MONITORING** LFTs, renal function, CBC **NOTES** IV:PO ratio is 1:1 (doxycycline, minocycline) Tablets and capsules should be taken with 8 oz of water; with doxycycline, sit upright for at least 30 mins after dose to avoid esophageal irritation
Minocycline *(Minocin, Solodyn*)* Capsule, tablet, injection, topical	PO/IV: 200 mg × 1, then 50-100 mg Q12H No renal dose adjustments required	
Eravacycline *(Xerava)* Injection	1 mg/kg IV Q12H	
Omadacycline *(Nuzyra)* Tablet, injection	Dose varies by indication	
Sarecycline *(Seysara)* Tablet	Dose based on body weight	
Tetracycline Capsule	PO: 250-500 mg Q6H on an empty stomach CrCl ≤ 50 mL/min: dose adjustment required	

**Brand discontinued but name still used in practice.*

TETRACYCLINE DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Antacids and other polyvalent cations (e.g., iron, magnesium, aluminum, phosphate, calcium, zinc, lanthanum), multivitamins, sucralfate, bismuth subsalicylate and bile acid resins can chelate and inhibit the absorption of tetracyclines. Separate administration. Dairy products should be avoided 1 hour before or 2 hours after tetracyclines.

KEY FEATURES OF TETRACYCLINES

Common Uses

- Doxycycline and minocycline: CA-MRSA skin infections, acne
- Doxycycline: first line for tickborne illnesses (Lyme disease, Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever), chlamydia; a treatment option for CAP, COPD exacerbations, bacterial sinusitis (if antibiotic indicated), VRE UTI
- Tetracycline: used in *H. pylori* treatment regimens (see the GERD & PUD chapter)

Do not use in pregnancy, breastfeeding or age < 8 years.

SULFONAMIDES

Sulfamethoxazole (SMX) inhibits dihydrofolic acid formation, which interferes with bacterial folic acid synthesis. Trimethoprim (TMP) inhibits dihydrofolic acid reduction to tetrahydrofolate, resulting in inhibition of the folic acid pathway.

Sulfamethoxazole/trimethoprim has activity against staphylococci (including MRSA); *S. pneumoniae* and Group A *Streptococcus* activity is unreliable. Activity against gram-negative bacteria is broad and includes *Haemophilus, Proteus, E. coli, Klebsiella, Enterobacter, Shigella, Salmonella* and *Stenotrophomonas*. SMX/TMP is active against some opportunistic pathogens *(Nocardia, Pneumocystis, Toxoplasma)*, but does not have activity against *Pseudomonas*, enterococci, atypicals or anaerobes.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Sulfamethoxazole/ Trimethoprim *(Bactrim, Bactrim DS, Sulfatrim Pediatric)* Tablet, suspension, injection **Single Strength (SS)** 400 mg SMX/80 mg TMP **Double Strength (DS)** 800 mg SMX/160 mg TMP All products are formulated with a SMX:TMP ratio = 5:1	Dose based on the TMP component **Severe Infections (IV/PO)** 10-20 mg TMP/kg/day, divided Q6-12H (e.g., 2 DS tablets BID-TID) **Uncomplicated UTI** 1 DS tablet PO BID × 3 days ***Pneumocystis* Pneumonia (PCP) Prophylaxis** 1 DS or SS tablet PO daily **PCP Treatment (IV/PO)** 15-20 mg TMP/kg/day divided Q6H CrCl 15-30 mL/min: dose adjustment required CrCl < 15 mL/min: not recommended	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Sulfa allergy, anemia due to folate deficiency, renal or hepatic disease, infants < 2 months **WARNINGS** Blood dyscrasias, including agranulocytosis, aplastic anemia Skin reactions: SJS/TEN, thrombotic thrombocytopenic purpura (TTP) Hemolytic anemia: can be immune-mediated (positive Coombs test) or caused by G6PD deficiency (do not use with known deficiency); discontinue drug if hemolysis occurs Hypoglycemia, thrombocytopenia Pregnancy (congenital defects): use only if benefit outweighs risk (see ID II chapter for UTI treatment options) **SIDE EFFECTS** Photosensitivity, ↑ K, crystalluria (take with 8 oz of water), N/V/D, anorexia, skin rash, ↓ folate, false elevations in SCr (due to inhibition of creatinine tubular secretion), renal failure **MONITORING** Renal function, electrolytes, CBC, folate IV SMX/TMP is compatible in dextrose only

SULFONAMIDE DRUG INTERACTIONS

- SMX/TMP is a moderate-strong CYP2C8 and CYP2C9 inhibitor and can ↑ INR if used with warfarin (see the Drug Interactions chapter).
- SMX/TMP can ↑ the toxic effects of methotrexate.
- The therapeutic effects of SMX/TMP can be ↓ by the use of leucovorin or levoleucovorin.
- The risk for hyperkalemia will ↑ in patients with renal dysfunction or if used in combination with ACE inhibitors, ARBs, aliskiren, aldosterone receptor antagonists (ARAs), potassium-sparing diuretics, cyclosporine, tacrolimus, NSAIDs, drospirenone-containing oral contraceptives or canagliflozin.

KEY FEATURES OF SULFAMETHOXAZOLE/ TRIMETHOPRIM

Common Uses
- CA-MRSA skin infections, UTI, *Pneumocystis* pneumonia (PCP)

5:1 Ratio of SMX/TMP (Dose Based on TMP)
- Single strength (SS) tablet contains 80 mg TMP
- Double strength (DS) tablet contains 160 mg TMP – usual dose is one tablet BID

Sulfa Allergy
- Reactions (rash/hives) are common with SMX/TMP
- Seek emergency care if rash is accomanied by fever or systemic symptoms; severe skin reactions (e.g., SJS,TEN) can rarely occur

INR ↑ when used with warfarin.

ANTIBIOTICS FOR GRAM-POSITIVE INFECTIONS

VANCOMYCIN

Vancomycin is a glycopeptide that inhibits bacterial cell wall synthesis by binding to the D-alanyl-D-alanine cell wall precursor and blocking peptidoglycan polymerization. Vancomycin only covers gram-positive bacteria, including staphylococci (MRSA), streptococci, enterococci (not VRE) and *C. difficile* (using the PO route only).

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Vancomycin Injection Oral capsule: ***Vancocin*** Oral solution: *Firvanq* First-line for moderate-severe systemic MRSA infections Consider an alternative drug if MRSA MIC ≥ 2 mcg/mL	**Systemic Infections** 15-20 mg/kg Q8-12H Dose based on total body weight CrCl 20-49 mL/min: Q24H CrCl < 20 mL/min: one dose, then dose per levels Peripheral IV infusions should be ≤ 5 mg/mL ***C. difficile* Infections** PO: 125 mg QID × 10 days 500 mg QID used for severe, complicated disease (in combination with IV metronidazole) No renal dose adjustments required	**WARNINGS** Ototoxicity and nephrotoxicity; caution with use of other nephrotoxic or ototoxic drugs or with prolonged high serum concentrations PO formulation is used only for *C. difficile* colitis and enterocolitis, not for systemic infections; IV formulation is not effective for *C. difficile* (does not cross into the GI tract) Vancomycin infusion reaction (maculopapular rash, flushing, hypotension and chills) from too rapid of an infusion rate; do not infuse faster than 1 gram per hour **SIDE EFFECTS** Abdominal pain, nausea (oral route), phlebitis (irritation to vein), myelosuppression (neutropenia, thrombocytopenia), drug fever, severe skin reactions (SJS/TEN) **MONITORING** Renal function, drug levels (see below), WBCs AUC/MIC ratio or steady state trough (drawn 30 minutes before the 4th or 5th dose) Serious MRSA infections (e.g., bacteremia, sepsis, endocarditis, pneumonia, osteomyelitis, meningitis): AUC/MIC ratio of 400-600 recommended or goal trough 15-20 mcg/mL Other infections (e.g., UTI, skin): goal trough 10-15 mcg/mL

VANCOMYCIN DRUG INTERACTIONS

- The risk of nephrotoxicity is ↑ when used with other nephrotoxic drugs (e.g., aminoglycosides, amphotericin B, cisplatin, polymyxins, cyclosporine, tacrolimus, loop diuretics, NSAIDs, radiographic contrast dye).
- Vancomycin can ↑ the risk of ototoxicity when used with other ototoxic drugs (e.g., aminoglycosides, cisplatin, loop diuretics).

LIPOGLYCOPEPTIDES

Lipoglycopeptides (with the generic name suffix "-vancin") inhibit bacterial cell wall synthesis by 1) binding to the D-alanyl-D-alanine portion of the cell wall, blocking polymerization and cross-linking of peptidoglycan, and 2) disrupting bacterial membrane potential and changing cell permeability. They have concentration-dependent activity against similar pathogens as vancomycin, but are only approved to treat skin and soft-tissue infections (SSTIs), except telavancin is also approved to treat hospital-acquired and ventilator-associated pneumonia.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Telavancin *(Vibativ)*	IV: 10 mg/kg daily Renal dose adjustments required	**BOXED WARNINGS (TELAVANCIN)** Fetal risk – pregnancy test required prior to starting therapy; nephrotoxicity; ↑ mortality (compared to vancomycin) when used in patients with pre-existing CrCl ≤ 50 mL/min **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Telavancin: concurrent use of IV unfractionated heparin (UFH) Oritavancin: do not use IV UFH for 120 hours (5 days) after administration due to interference (false elevations) with aPTT laboratory results **WARNINGS** Infusion reaction (similar to vancomycin) with rapid IV administration Oritavancin, telavancin: falsely ↑ aPTT/PT/INR but do not ↑ bleeding risk Telavancin: QT prolongation Oritavancin: use different antibiotic if osteomyelitis confirmed or suspected Dalbavancin: ↑ ALT > 3× the upper limit of normal
Oritavancin *(Orbactiv, Kimyrsa)*	Single-dose IV regimen: 1,200 mg	
Dalbavancin *(Dalvance)*	Single-dose IV regimen: 1,500 mg Renal dose adjustments required	

TELAVANCIN DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Avoid telavancin in patients with congenital long QT syndrome, known QT prolongation or decompensated heart failure. Use caution in combination with other QT-prolonging drugs (see the Arrhythmias chapter).

DAPTOMYCIN

Daptomycin is a cyclic lipopeptide. It binds to cell membrane components, causing rapid depolarization; this inhibits all intracellular replication processes, including protein synthesis, and causes cell death. Daptomycin has concentration-dependent activity against most gram-positive bacteria, including staphylococci (MRSA) and enterococci (VRE). It has no activity against gram-negative pathogens.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Daptomycin *(Cubicin*)* Do not use to treat pneumonia; drug is inactivated in the lungs by surfactant	SSTI: 4 mg/kg IV daily Bacteremia or right-sided endocarditis: 6 mg/kg IV daily (doses up to 10 mg/kg IV daily may be used in practice) CrCl < 30 mL/min: Q48H	**WARNINGS** Myopathy and rhabdomyolysis: discontinue if symptoms and CPK > 1,000 units/L, or in asymptomatic patients with a CPK > 2,000 units/L; consider temporarily withholding other drugs that can cause muscle damage (e.g., statins) during treatment Can falsely ↑ PT/INR but does not ↑ bleeding risk Peripheral neuropathy Hypersensitivity reactions (e.g., DRESS, eosinophilic pneumonia, interstitial nephritis) **SIDE EFFECTS** ↑ CPK, abdominal pain, pruritus, chest pain, edema, hypertension **MONITORING** CPK weekly (more frequent if on a statin or with renal impairment); muscle pain/weakness, symptoms of neuropathy, dyspnea **NOTES** Compatible with NS and LR (no dextrose)

**Brand discontinued but name still used in practice.*

OXAZOLIDINONES

Linezolid and tedizolid bind to the 50S subunit of the bacterial ribosome, inhibiting translation and protein synthesis. They have activity against similar pathogens as vancomycin (e.g., MRSA), but also cover VRE.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Linezolid *(Zyvox)* Tablet, suspension, injection	PO/IV: 600 mg Q12H No renal dose adjustments required IV:PO ratio is 1:1	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Do not use with or within 2 weeks of MAO inhibitors **WARNINGS** Duration-related myelosuppression (thrombocytopenia, anemia, leukopenia) when used > 14 days, peripheral and optic neuropathy when used > 28 days, serotonin syndrome, hypoglycemia (caution with insulin or other hypoglycemic drugs), hyponatremia, seizures, lactic acidosis, ↑ BP (caution and monitor BP in patients with uncontrolled hypertension or untreated hyperthyroidism) **SIDE EFFECTS** ↓ platelets, ↓ Hgb, ↓ WBC, headache, nausea, diarrhea, ↑ LFTs **MONITORING** Weekly CBC, HR, BP, BG (in diabetes), visual function **NOTES** Do not shake linezolid suspension
Tedizolid *(Sivextro)* Tablet, injection Approved for SSTI only	PO/IV: 200 mg daily No renal dose adjustments required IV:PO ratio is 1:1	**WARNINGS** Consider alternative treatment in patients with neutropenia **SIDE EFFECTS** Nausea, diarrhea, dizziness, infusion-related reactions

LINEZOLID/TEDIZOLID DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Linezolid and tedizolid are reversible monoamine oxidase inhibitors. Avoid tyramine-containing foods and serotonergic drugs (see the Drug Interactions chapter).
- Linezolid can exacerbate hypoglycemic episodes; use caution in patients receiving insulin or oral hypoglycemic drugs (e.g., sulfonylureas).

ADDITIONAL BROAD-SPECTRUM DRUGS

TIGECYCLINE

Tigecycline (a glycylcycline) binds to the 30S ribosomal subunit and inhibits protein synthesis. It has broad-spectrum activity against gram-positive bacteria, including staphylococci (MRSA) and enterococci (VRE), gram-negative bacteria, anaerobes and atypical organisms. Among the gram-negatives, it has no activity against the "3 P's": *Pseudomonas, Proteus* and *Providencia*. Clinical use of tigecycline is limited (see Boxed Warning).

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Tigecycline *(Tygacil)* Injection	IV: 100 mg × 1 dose, then 50 mg Q12H Severe hepatic impairment: dose adjustment required No renal dose adjustments required	**BOXED WARNING** ↑ risk of death, use only when alternative treatments are not suitable **WARNINGS** Anaphylaxis (avoid with tetracycline-class allergy due to similar structure) Hepatotoxicity, pancreatitis, photosensitivity, bone growth suppression and teeth discoloration in children age < 8 years (avoid use) **SIDE EFFECTS** N/V (can be intractable), diarrhea, headache, dizziness, ↑ LFTs, rash, severe skin reactions (SJS) **NOTES** Do not use for bloodstream infections; it does not achieve adequate concentrations in the blood since it is lipophilic (drug distributes quickly out of the blood into tissues) Reconstituted solution should be yellow-orange; discard if not this color

POLYMYXINS

The polymyxin class consists of two drugs, colistimethate (sometimes referred to as colistin) and polymyxin B. Colistimethate is an inactive prodrug that is converted to colistin. Colistin and polymyxin B act as cationic detergents and damage the bacterial cytoplasmic membrane, causing leakage of intracellular substances and cell death. Polymyxins have activity against gram-negative bacteria, such as *Enterobacter* spp., *E. coli, Klebsiella pneumoniae* and *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* (but not *Proteus* spp.). Due to the risk of toxicities, they are used primarily for MDR gram-negative pathogens in combination with other antibiotics.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Colistimethate *(Coly-Mycin M)* Injection can be used for inhalation administration	IV/IM: 2.5-5 mg/kg/day in 2-4 divided doses Inhalation solutions must be mixed immediately prior to administration	**WARNINGS** Dose-dependent nephrotoxicity (monitor renal function), neurotoxicity (dizziness, headache, tingling, oral paresthesia, vertigo, respiratory paralysis from neuromuscular blockade) **NOTES** Assess dose carefully (can be units of colistimethate, mg of colistimethate or mg of colistin base activity)
Polymyxin B	IV: 15,000-25,000 units/kg/day in 2 divided doses 1 mg = 10,000 units polymyxin B	**BOXED WARNINGS** Dose-dependent nephrotoxicity (monitor renal function) Neurotoxicity (dizziness, tingling, numbness, paresthesia, vertigo, respiratory paralysis from neuromuscular blockade) Should only be administered to hospitalized patients Avoid concurrent use of other neurotoxic or nephrotoxic drugs

POLYMYXIN DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Risk of nephrotoxicity is increased if used in combination with other nephrotoxic drugs, including aminoglycosides, amphotericin B, cisplatin, cyclosporine, loop diuretics, NSAIDs, radiocontrast dye, tacrolimus and vancomycin.

CHLORAMPHENICOL

Chloramphenicol reversibly binds to the 50S subunit of the bacterial ribosome, inhibiting protein synthesis. It has activity against gram-positive, gram-negative, anaerobic and atypical organisms; however, it is rarely used due to adverse effects, notably fatal blood dyscrasias (e.g., aplastic anemia, pancytopenia) and Gray syndrome (e.g., circulatory collapse, cyanosis, acidosis).

MISCELLANEOUS ANTIBIOTICS

CLINDAMYCIN

Clindamycin is a lincosamide that reversibly binds to the 50S subunit of the bacterial ribosome, inhibiting protein synthesis. It has activity against most gram-positive bacteria, including some CA-MRSA and anaerobes. It does not cover *Enterococcus* or gram-negative pathogens and has minimal gram-negative anaerobic activity.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Clindamycin *(Cleocin)* Injection, capsule, solution Topical: ***Cleocin-T, Clindagel,*** *Clindacin-P* Vaginal: *Clindesse, Cleocin*	PO: 150-450 mg Q6H IV: 600-900 mg Q8H No renal dose adjustments required	**BOXED WARNING** Colitis *(C. difficile)* **WARNING** Severe or fatal skin reactions (SJS, TEN, DRESS) **SIDE EFFECTS** N/V/D, rash, urticaria, ↑ LFTs (rare) **NOTES** An induction test (D-test) should be performed on *S. aureus* that is susceptible to clindamycin but resistant to erythromycin; a flattened zone between the disks (positive D-test) indicates inducible clindamycin resistance and clindamycin should not be used

METRONIDAZOLE AND RELATED DRUGS

These antibiotics cause a loss of helical DNA structure and strand breakage, which inhibits microbial protein synthesis. Metronidazole has activity against anaerobes and protozoal organisms. It is effective for bacterial vaginosis, trichomoniasis, giardiasis, amebiasis and *C. difficile* (though not preferred), and is used in combination regimens for intra-abdominal infections.

Tinidazole is related to metronidazole, but its activity is limited to protozoa (giardiasis, amebiasis), trichomoniasis and bacterial vaginosis organisms. Secnidazole is only indicated for bacterial vaginosis and trichomoniasis.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Metronidazole *(Flagyl, Likmez)* Tablet, capsule, injection, suspension Topical: *MetroCream, Metrogel, MetroLotion, Noritate* Vaginal: *Nuvessa, Vandazole*	PO/IV: 500-750 mg Q8-12H or 250-500 mg Q6-8H No renal dose adjustments required Take with food to ↓ GI upset IV:PO ratio is 1:1	**BOXED WARNING** Possibly carcinogenic based on animal data **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Pregnancy (1st trimester), use of alcohol or propylene glycol-containing products during treatment or within 3 days of treatment discontinuation (disulfiram reaction) Metronidazole: use of disulfiram within the past 2 weeks Tinidazole: breastfeeding **WARNINGS** CNS effects: seizures, peripheral neuropathy Metronidazole: aseptic meningitis, encephalopathy, optic neuropathy **SIDE EFFECTS** Metallic taste, headache, nausea, furry tongue, dizziness, rash, severe skin reactions (SJS/TEN) **NOTES** See the ID II chapter for a discussion of use for STIs in pregnancy
Tinidazole Tablet	PO: 2 grams daily Take with food to minimize GI effects No renal dose adjustments required	
Secnidazole *(Solosec)* Granule packet	PO: 2 gram single dose Sprinkle contents of 1 packet onto applesauce, yogurt or pudding and consume within 30 mins; do not chew the granules	**WARNINGS** Vulvovaginal candidiasis, possibly carcinogenic (based on animal data with structurally similar drugs) **SIDE EFFECTS** Headache, N/D

METRONIDAZOLE DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Should not be used with alcohol (during and for 3 days after discontinuation of treatment) due to a potential disulfiram-like reaction (abdominal cramping, headaches, nausea/vomiting, flushing).
- Metronidazole is a weak inhibitor of CYP2C9 and can cause an ↑ INR in patients taking warfarin.

LEFAMULIN

Lefamulin is a first-in-class pleuromutilin. It inhibits bacterial protein synthesis by binding to the peptidyl transferase center of the 50S ribosomal subunit.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Lefamulin *(Xenleta)* Tablet, injection	PO: 600 mg Q12H IV: 150 mg Q12H	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Use with CYP3A4 substrates that prolong the QT interval **WARNINGS** Pregnancy (teratogenic), QT prolongation **SIDE EFFECTS** Diarrhea, nausea, injection site reactions

FIDAXOMICIN

Fidaxomicin inhibits RNA polymerase, resulting in inhibition of protein synthesis and cell death. It is used for *C. difficile* infections.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Fidaxomicin ***(Dificid)*** Tablet, suspension	PO: 200 mg BID × 10 days No renal dose adjustments required	**WARNINGS** Not effective for systemic infections – absorption is minimal **SIDE EFFECTS** N/V, abdominal pain, GI bleeding, anemia

RIFAXIMIN

Rifaximin inhibits bacterial RNA synthesis by binding to bacterial DNA-dependent RNA polymerase.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Rifaximin *(Xifaxan)* Tablet	Travelers' diarrhea: 200 mg TID × 3 days Hepatic encephalopathy: 550 mg BID or 400 mg Q8H Irritable bowel syndrome w/ diarrhea (IBS-D): 550 mg TID × 14 days No renal dose adjustments required	**SIDE EFFECTS** Peripheral edema, dizziness, headache, nausea, abdominal pain, rash/pruritus **NOTES** Not effective for systemic infections (< 1% absorbed) Used off-label for *C. difficile* infections (third or subsequent recurrence)

URINARY AGENTS

FOSFOMYCIN

Inactivates the enzyme pyruval transferase, which is critical in the synthesis of cell walls. It has activity against *E. coli* (including ESBL-producing strains) and *E. faecalis* (including VRE). A single-dose regimen is used for uncomplicated UTI (cystitis only).

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Fosfomycin Packet granules = 3 gram per packet	**Female, Uncomplicated UTI** 3 grams PO × 1, mixed in 3-4 oz of cold water	**SIDE EFFECTS** Headache, diarrhea, nausea **NOTES** Concentrates in the urine

NITROFURANTOIN

Nitrofurantoin is a bacterial cell wall, DNA, RNA and protein synthesis inhibitor. It is used for uncomplicated UTI (cystitis only). It covers *E. coli, Klebsiella, Enterobacter, S. aureus* and *Enterococcus* (including VRE).

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/ MONITORING
Nitrofurantoin *(Macrobid, Macrodantin)* Capsule, suspension	*Macrodantin:* 50-100 mg QID × 3-7 days; 50-100 mg QHS for prophylaxis *Macrobid:* 100 mg BID × 5 days	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Renal impairment (CrCl < 60 mL/min*): inadequate urine concentration and risk for accumulation of neurotoxins; history of cholestatic jaundice/hepatic dysfunction with previous use; pregnancy (at term) **WARNINGS** Optic neuritis, hepatotoxicity, peripheral neuropathy, pulmonary toxicity, G6PD deficiency (can cause hemolytic anemia; do not use if known deficiency) **SIDE EFFECTS** GI upset (take with food), headache, rash, brown urine discoloration (harmless) **NOTES** Concentrates in the urine

**Per package labeling. Some sources (e.g., Beers Criteria) recommend use if CrCl > 30 mL/min.*

KEY FEATURES OF NITROFURANTOIN

Common Use
- Uncomplicated UTI (see ID II chapter for a discussion of use in pregnancy)

Do Not Use
- CrCl < 60 mL/min
- G6PD deficiency

Dosing
- Macro**bid** is BID
- Macrodantin is QID

Counseling
- Take with food to prevent nausea, cramping
- Can discolor the urine (brown)

TOPICAL DECOLONIZATION

MUPIROCIN NASAL OINTMENT

Mupirocin is a topical ointment used to eliminate staphylococci (MRSA) colonization of the nares. See the Common Skin Conditions chapter for a discussion of topical mupirocin use for infected skin lesions.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Mupirocin	**Decolonization** ~500 mg in each nostril BID × 5 days	**SIDE EFFECTS** Headache, burning, localized irritation, rhinitis, pharyngitis

SUMMARY TABLES

COMMONLY USED DRUGS FOR SPECIFIC PATHOGENS

Methicillin-susceptible *Staphylococcus aureus* (MSSA)
Dicloxacillin, nafcillin, oxacillin

Cefazolin, cephalexin and other 1st and 2nd generation cephalosporins

Amoxicillin/clavulanate, ampicillin/sulbactam

Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA)
Vancomycin (consider using alternative if MIC ≥ 2)

Linezolid

Daptomycin (not for pneumonia)

Ceftaroline

CA-MRSA SSTIs: SMX/TMP, doxycycline, clindamycin*

Vancomycin-resistant *Enterococcus* (VRE)
Pen G or ampicillin *(E. faecalis* only)

Linezolid

Daptomycin

Cystitis only: nitrofurantoin, fosfomycin, doxycycline

Atypical organisms
Azithromycin, clarithromycin

Doxycycline, minocycline

Quinolones

HNPEK
Beta-lactam/beta-lactamase inhibitor

Cephalosporins (1st generation covers PEK)

Carbapenems

Aminoglycosides

Quinolones

SMX/TMP

Pseudomonas aeruginosa
Piperacillin/tazobactam

Cefepime

Ceftazidime

Ceftazidime/avibactam

Ceftolozane/tazobactam

Carbapenems (except ertapenem)

Ciprofloxacin, levofloxacin

Aztreonam

Tobramycin

CAPES
Piperacillin/tazobactam

Cefepime

Carbapenems

Aminoglycosides

Extended-spectrum beta-lactamase (ESBL) producing gram-negative rods *(E. coli, K. pneumoniae, P. mirabilis)*
Carbapenems

Ceftazidime/avibactam

Ceftolozane/tazobactam

Carbapenem-resistant gram-negative rods (CRE)
Ceftazidime/avibactam

Meropenem/vaborbactam

Imipenem/cilastatin/relebactam

Colistimethate, polymyxin B

Gram-negative anaerobes *(Bacteroides fragilis)*
Metronidazole

Beta-lactam/beta-lactamase inhibitor

Cefotetan, cefoxitin

Carbapenems

Moxifloxacin (reduced activity)

C. difficile
Vancomycin (oral)

Fidaxomicin

Metronidazole

**A D-test must be performed before using clindamycin.*
CA-MRSA SSTIs = community-acquired methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* skin and soft tissue infections.
CAPES = *Citrobacter, Acinetobacter, Providencia, Enterobacter, Serratia.*
HNPEK = *Haemophilus, Neisseria, Proteus, E. coli, Klebsiella.*

STORAGE REQUIREMENTS: LIQUID ORAL ANTIMICROBIALS*

REFRIGERATION REQUIRED AFTER RECONSTITUTION

Penicillin VK	Cefpodoxime	Fidaxomicin
Amoxicillin/Clavulanate	Cefprozil	Vancomycin oral
Cephalexin	Cefuroxime	Valganciclovir**
Cefadroxil	Cefaclor	

REFRIGERATION RECOMMENDED

Amoxicillin – improves taste

Oseltamivir** – increases shelf life

DO NOT REFRIGERATE

Cefdinir	Ciprofloxacin	Acyclovir**
Azithromycin	Levofloxacin	Fluconazole**
Clarithromycin – bitter taste, thickens/gels	Linezolid	Itraconazole**
Clindamycin – thickens, may crystallize	Metronidazole	Posaconazole**
Doxycycline	Nitrofurantoin	Voriconazole**
Erythromycin	Sulfamethoxazole/Trimethoprim	Nystatin**

**Most oral suspensions should be discarded 10-14 days after reconstitution.*
***Discussed in the ID III chapter.*

STORAGE REQUIREMENTS: IV ANTIMICROBIALS

Most IV medications are refrigerated; the list below represents a few that are not. See the Intravenous Medication Principles chapter for a complete list of drugs that should not be refrigerated.

DO NOT REFRIGERATE

Metronidazole

Moxifloxacin

Sulfamethoxazole/Trimethoprim

Acyclovir* – refrigeration causes crystallization

**Discussed in the ID III chapter.*

RENAL DOSE ADJUSTMENTS

Many antibiotics are cleared through the kidneys and require dose adjustments based on renal function. This includes most beta-lactams and quinolones. See the Key Drugs Guy for antibiotics that do not require renal adjustment.

NO RENAL DOSE ADJUSTMENT REQUIRED

KEY DRUGS

Antistaphylococcal penicillins (e.g., dicloxacillin, nafcillin)

Azithromycin and erythromycin

Ceftriaxone

Clindamycin

Doxycycline

Metronidazole

Moxifloxacin

Linezolid

Others:

Fidaxomicin

Select tetracyclines (e.g., eravacycline, seracycline, omadacycline)

Rifaximin

Rifampin*

Tedizolid

Tigecycline

Tinidazole

Vancomycin (PO only)

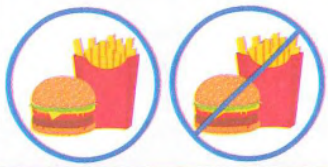
**Discussed in the ID II chapter.*

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS

Take With/Without Food

Most antibiotics can be taken with food to decrease GI upset

Exceptions (take on an empty stomach):
Ampicillin oral capsules, levofloxacin oral solution, penicillin VK, tetracycline, doxycycline *(Oracea* brand only), rifampin*, isoniazid*, itraconazole oral solution*, voriconazole*



1:1 IV to Oral Dosing

For these drugs, the oral and IV doses are the same.

Azithromycin

Levofloxacin, moxifloxacin

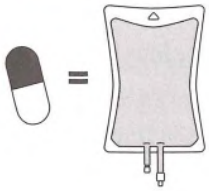
Doxycycline, minocycline

Linezolid, tedizolid

Metronidazole

Sulfamethoxazole/Trimethoprim

Fluconazole*, isavuconazonium*, posaconazole* (oral tablets and IV), voriconazole*



Light Protection During Administration

See the Intravenous Medication Principles chapter for a complete list of drugs that require specific light protection.

Doxycycline

Micafungin*

Pentamidine*

Diluent Compatibility Requirements

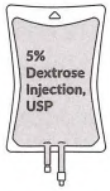
See the Intravenous Medication Principles chapter for a complete list of drugs that require specific diluents.

Compatible with dextrose only

Sulfamethoxazole/Trimethoprim

Amphotericin B*

Pentamidine*

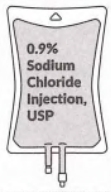


Compatible with saline only

Ampicillin

Ampicillin/Sulbactam

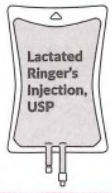
Ertapenem



Compatible with NS/LR only

Caspofungin*

Daptomycin



**Discussed in the ID II-IV chapters.*

KEY COUNSELING POINTS

See the Drug Formulations and Patient Counseling chapter for counseling language/layman's terminology.

ALL ANTIBIOTICS

- Proper storage (temperature) and administration (with or without food) is essential.
- Shake suspensions (except linezolid) well.
- Antibiotics treat bacterial infections. They do not treat viral infections, such as the common cold.
- Complete the full course of therapy.
- Measure liquid doses carefully using the measuring device/syringe that comes with the medication. Do not use household spoons.
- Some oral liquid and chewable dosage forms contain phenylalanine. Do not use if you have phenylketonuria (PKU).
- Can cause:
  - Rash, nausea.
  - Diarrhea, including *C. difficile*-associated diarrhea (abdominal pain, cramps, watery or bloody stool).

QUINOLONES

- Can cause:
  - CNS effects, including seizures.
  - Hypo/hyperglycemia.
  - Peripheral neuropathy.
  - Photosensitivity.
  - QT prolongation.
  - Tendinitis or tendon rupture. Can present with a "pop" or pain/swelling in the back of the ankle (Achilles), shoulder or hand.
- Avoid in pregnancy, breastfeeding and children.
- Drug interactions due to binding.

MACROLIDES

- Can cause:
  - GI upset.
  - QT prolongation.
- *Z-Pak:* take two tablets on day 1, followed by one tablet daily on days 2 – 5.

TETRACYCLINES

- Avoid in pregnancy, breastfeeding or age < 8 years.
- Drug interactions due to binding.
- Can cause photosensitivity.

DOXYCYCLINE (ORAL)

- Take with a full glass of water and remain upright for 30 minutes after the dose to avoid GI irritation.

SULFAMETHOXAZOLE/ TRIMETHOPRIM

- Avoid in:
  - Pregnancy or breastfeeding.
  - Sulfa allergy.
- Can cause:
  - Photosensitivity.
  - Crystals in urine. Take with a full glass of water.

METRONIDAZOLE

- Do not consume products containing alcohol while using this medication, and for at least 3 days after.
- Can cause nausea and metallic taste in the mouth.

NITROFURANTOIN

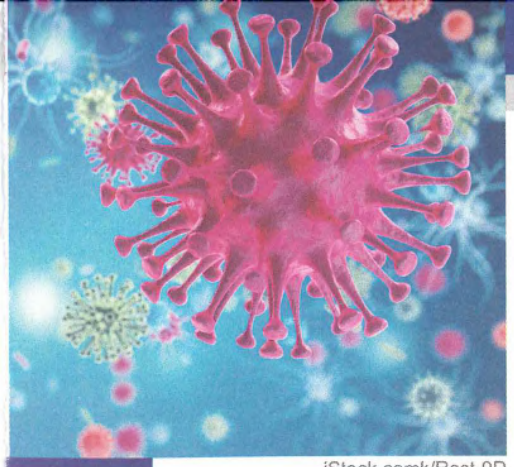
- Take with food to ↓ nausea.
- Can cause brown urine (temporary, harmless).

MUPIROCIN NASAL OINTMENT

- Place an amount sufficient to cover a cotton swab into each nostril. Press the nostrils at the same time and let go many times to spread into the nose.
- Can cause burning and itching in the nose.

Select Guidelines/References

Guidelines available at the Infectious Diseases Society of America website (www.idsociety.org)



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CHAPTER 23

INFECTIOUS DISEASES II: BACTERIAL INFECTIONS

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= Study Tip Gal

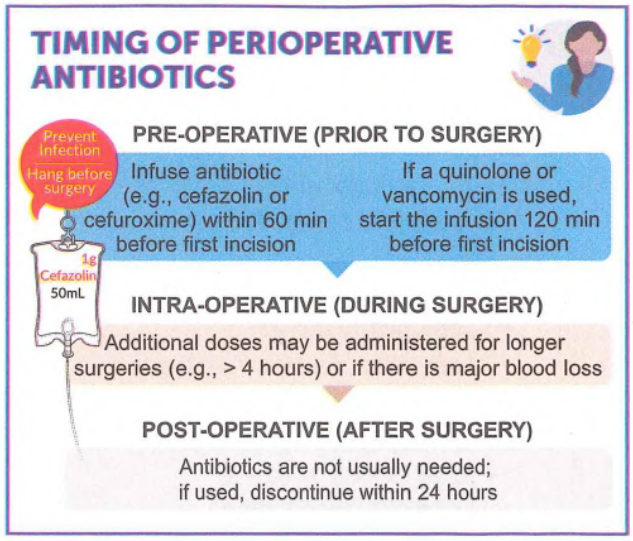
BACKGROUND

The Infectious Diseases I chapter should be reviewed first to gain a working knowledge of bacterial pathogens, microbiology reports, bacterial resistance and antimicrobial drugs, including their spectrum of activity and pharmacokinetic/pharmacodynamic properties that play an important role in selecting treatment for infections.

PERIOPERATIVE ANTIBIOTIC PROPHYLAXIS

When a surgeon cuts into the skin during a surgical procedure, local bacterial flora at the incision site can cause contamination and subsequent infection. Skin flora (e.g., staphylococci and streptococci) are common causes of infection, with gram-negative and anaerobic organisms playing a role in select surgeries (e.g., intra-abdominal procedures). Intravenous (IV) antibiotics are given prior to surgery to reduce this risk. The preferred regimens and alternatives are shown in the Perioperative Antibiotic Selection table below.

The recommended start time for antibiotics is based on drug half-life and infusion time to ensure adequate tissue concentrations are achieved by the time surgery begins. The Study Tip Gal flow diagram to the right provides details on the timing of antibiotics.



PERIOPERATIVE ANTIBIOTIC SELECTION

- Cefazolin (a first-generation cephalosporin) or cefuroxime (a second-generation cephalosporin) is preferred for most surgeries to prevent methicillin-susceptible *S. aureus* (MSSA) and streptococcal infections.
- Clindamycin is an alternative if the patient has a beta-lactam allergy.
- In gastrointestinal surgeries, the prophylactic antibiotic regimen needs to cover skin flora plus broad gram-negative and anaerobic organisms.
- Vancomycin should be included in the regimen if MRSA colonization or risk is present. Vancomycin is also an alternative (instead of clindamycin) if the patient has a beta-lactam allergy.

SURGICAL PROCEDURE	RECOMMENDED ANTIBIOTICS*	BETA-LACTAM ALLERGY
Cardiac or vascular	Cefazolin or cefuroxime	Clindamycin or vancomycin
Orthopedic (e.g., hip fracture repair, joint replacement)	Cefazolin	
Gastrointestinal (e.g., appendectomy, colorectal surgery)	Cefazolin + metronidazole, cefotetan, cefoxitin, or ampicillin/sulbactam	Clindamycin or metronidazole + aminoglycoside or quinolone

**For patients colonized with MRSA or procedures in hospitals with a high prevalence of post-operative MRSA infections, add vancomycin.*

MENINGITIS

Meningitis is an inflammation of the membranes (meninges) that cover the brain and spinal cord. The meninges swell, causing classic symptoms of fever, headache, nuchal rigidity (stiff neck) and altered mental status. Other symptoms include chills, vomiting, seizures, rash and photophobia. Meningitis symptoms must be quickly recognized and treated to avoid severe complications, including death.

Diagnosis is made via a lumbar puncture (LP), during which a sample of cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) is collected for analysis (e.g., WBCs, protein, glucose); a gram stain and culture are also performed to help guide antibiotic treatment. A high CSF pressure (sometimes referred to as the "opening pressure") detected during the LP is another sign of possible infection. It is preferable to perform the LP prior to starting antibiotics; however, treatment should be initiated if the LP is delayed.

Meningitis is mostly caused by viruses but can be due to bacteria or fungi. The most common bacterial causes are *Neisseria meningitidis, Streptococcus pneumoniae* and *Haemophilus influenzae;* the risk of infection with these pathogens has decreased with routine vaccinations (see the Immunizations chapter). The risk of meningitis due to *Listeria monocytogenes* is higher in neonates, patients age > 50 years and immunocompromised patients.

ACUTE BACTERIAL MENINGITIS TREATMENT (COMMUNITY-ACQUIRED)

- The recommended empiric antibiotic regimens are based on the likely causative pathogens according to patient age and immune status (see Study Tip Gal below). Aggressive (high) doses are used to penetrate the CNS (e.g., ceftriaxone 2 grams Q12H).
- Antibiotic durations are pathogen-dependent:
  - 7 days for *N. meningitidis* and *H. influenzae*
  - 10 – 14 days for *S. pneumoniae*
  - At least 21 days for *Listeria monocytogenes*
- IV dexamethasone, administered 15 – 20 minutes prior to or with the first antibiotic dose, can prevent neurological complications (e.g., hearing loss) and death from pneumococcal meningitis. Since the causative pathogen is not known at the time empiric treatment is initiated, it is appropriate to administer dexamethasone in all cases. The adult dose is 0.15 mg/kg (rounded to the nearest 10 mg) IV Q6H for 4 days. If *S. pneumoniae* is not identified as the cause of meningitis, dexamethasone should be discontinued.

MENINGITIS: EMPIRIC TREATMENT*

COVER THE MOST COMMON BACTERIA

- *Streptococcus pneumoniae* and *Neisseria meningitidis* for most adult patients.
- Add coverage for *Listeria monocytogenes* in neonates, age > 50 years and immunocompromised patients.
- Add vancomycin in patients age ≥ 1 month for double coverage of *Streptococcus pneumoniae.*

AGE < 1 MONTH (NEONATES)	AGE 1 MONTH TO 50 YEARS	AGE > 50 YEARS OR IMMUNOCOMPROMISED
Ampicillin (for *Listeria* coverage) + Ceftazidime or cefepime ± Gentamicin	Ceftriaxone + Vancomycin	Ampicillin (for *Listeria* coverage) + Ceftriaxone + Vancomycin

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DO NOT USE CEFTRIAXONE IN NEONATES

- Ceftriaxone can cause biliary sludging (solids that precipitate from bile) and kernicterus (brain damage from high bilirubin) in neonates.

**If severe penicillin allergy (adults): treat with a quinolone (e.g., moxifloxacin) + vancomycin ± SMX/TMP (for Listeria coverage); obtain Infectious Diseases consult.*

UPPER RESPIRATORY TRACT INFECTIONS

ACUTE OTITIS MEDIA (AOM)

Acute otitis media (AOM) is the most common childhood infection in the U.S. requiring antibiotic treatment. Signs and symptoms often have a rapid onset and include bulging tympanic (eardrum) membranes, otorrhea (middle ear effusion/fluid), otalgia (ear pain), fever, crying and tugging or rubbing the ears.

- Most AOM is caused by viruses (antibiotics are ineffective).
- *S. pneumoniae, H. influenzae* or *Moraxella catarrhalis* are common causes of bacterial infection.
- Observation (without antibiotics) for 48 – 72 hours is an option for select patients age ≥ 6 months with non-severe AOM (see Study Tip Gal). Severe AOM is defined as having an ill appearance, otorrhea, otalgia > 48 hours or a temperature ≥ 102.2°F (39°C). Observation is not an option for children age < 6 months and antibiotics should be prescribed.

ANTIBIOTIC TREATMENT

- High-dose amoxicillin or amoxicillin/clavulanate are first-line (see table below). High-dose amoxicillin is needed to cover most strains of *S. pneumoniae.*
- With amoxicillin/clavulanate, the formulation with the least amount of clavulanate should be used to decrease the risk of diarrhea. The target amoxicillin to clavulanate ratio is 14:1, making *Augmentin ES-600* (amoxicillin 600 mg and clavulanate 42.9 mg per 5 mL) a preferred formulation.

AOM IN KIDS: WHEN TO CONSIDER OBSERVATION

Try observation for 2-3 days if symptoms are non-severe [(otalgia < 48 hrs, no otorrhea, temperature < 102.2°F (39°C)] and:

- Age 6-23 months: symptoms in one ear only.
- Age ≥ 2 years: symptoms in one or both ears.

If symptoms do not improve, or worsen, use antibiotics.

Example:
A physician gives a prescription for amoxicillin to a parent whose 18-month-old son has non-severe AOM on the right-side only, and advises the parent:
"Don't fill it right away; wait for a couple of days and see if he improves without medication. If he does not get any better, go ahead and get the medication filled."

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- In children with a non-severe penicillin allergy, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends a second- or third-generation cephalosporin because there is a low risk of cross-reactivity. Non-beta-lactam antibiotics that are suitable for use in children (e.g., azithromycin) have limited efficacy against typical AOM pathogens due to resistance.
- The treatment duration with oral medications is:
  - ☐ 10 days for age < 2 years
  - ☐ 7 days for ages 2 – 5 years
  - ☐ 5 – 7 days for ages ≥ 6 years

ACUTE OTITIS MEDIA: ANTIBIOTIC TREATMENT

FIRST-LINE TREATMENT	ALTERNATIVE TREATMENT (MILD PENICILLIN ALLERGY**)	TREATMENT FAILURE (NOT IMPROVED AFTER 2-3 DAYS)
Amoxicillin: 90 mg/kg/day in 2 divided doses or Amoxicillin/clavulanate*: 90 mg/kg/day of amoxicillin with 6.4 mg/kg/day of clavulanate, in 2 divided doses	Cefdinir 14 mg/kg/day in 1 or 2 doses	Amoxicillin/clavulanate (if amoxicillin used initially): 90 mg/kg/day of amoxicillin with 6.4 mg/kg/day of clavulanate, in 2 divided doses or Ceftriaxone 50 mg/kg IM daily for 3 days
	Cefuroxime 30 mg/kg/day in 2 divided doses	
	Cefpodoxime 10 mg/kg/day in 2 divided doses	
	Ceftriaxone 50 mg/kg IM daily for 1 or 3 days	

**Preferred in patients who have received amoxicillin in the past 30 days.*
***Delayed-onset reaction (> 48 hours after the first antibiotic dose) appearing as a nonpruritic or mildly pruritic maculopapular rash, but lacking systemic symptoms (e.g., hives, bronchospasm, anaphylaxis) or other serious reactions (e.g., Stevens-Johnson syndrome).*

OVERVIEW OF NON-AOM UPPER RESPIRATORY TRACT INFECTIONS

The majority of upper respiratory tract infections are caused by viruses and antibiotics are not beneficial. The potential exceptions are pharyngitis and sinusitis.

	Typical Etiology	Clinical Presentation	Criteria for Anti-Infective Treatment	Treatment Options
COMMON COLD	Respiratory viruses (e.g., rhinovirus, seasonal coronavirus)	Sneezing, runny nose, mild sore throat and/or cough, congestion	None; resolves in a few days	Symptomatic care: OTC analgesic, decongestant, cough suppressant, expectorant and/or antihistamine; see the Allergic Rhinitis, Cough & Cold chapter
INFLUENZA	Influenza virus	Sudden fever, chills, fatigue, myalgia, dry cough, sore throat, headache Symptoms are more severe than the common cold	Suspected or confirmed infection (e.g., positive rapid antigen test) and: Symptoms < 48 hrs, severe illness (e.g., hospitalized) or symptoms plus risk factors for influenza complications	Symptomatic care with or without antiviral therapy (see the Infectious Diseases III chapter)
COVID-19	Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2)	Can range from asymptomatic to severe symptoms (e.g., fever, chills, shortness of breath, myalgia, loss of taste/smell, cough)	Suspected or confirmed infection (e.g., positive rapid antigen test) and: Immunocompromised, older age or at risk for progression to severe disease (e.g., chronic lung disease)	Symptomatic care with or without antiviral therapy (see the Infectious Diseases III chapter)
PHARYNGITIS	Respiratory viruses Group A *Streptococcus (S. pyogenes)* Also called "strep throat"	Sore throat, fever, swollen lymph nodes, white patches (exudates) on tonsils There is an absence of cough, runny nose or congestion	Rapid antigen test (tonsil swab) or throat culture positive for *S. pyogenes*	Penicillin or amoxicillin Mild penicillin allergy: 1st or 2nd generation cephalosporin Severe reaction (e.g., anaphylaxis) to penicillin: macrolide (e.g., azithromycin) or clindamycin
ACUTE SINUSITIS	Respiratory viruses, *S. pneumoniae*, *H. influenzae*, *M. catarrhalis*	Nasal congestion, purulent nasal discharge, facial/ear/dental pain or pressure, headache, fever	≥ 10 days of persistent symptoms or ≥ 3 days of severe symptoms (face pain, purulent nasal discharge, temperature > 102°F) or Worsening symptoms after initial improvement	Amoxicillin/clavulanate or Symptomatic care for up to 7 days with OTC decongestant, antihistamine, expectorant and/or analgesic; antibiotics can be used if symptoms worsen or do not improve

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LOWER RESPIRATORY TRACT INFECTIONS

ACUTE BRONCHITIS

Bronchitis is inflammation of the mucous membranes of the bronchi. The key defining features include:

- Non-productive or productive cough lasting 1 – 3 weeks, chest wall tenderness, wheezing and/or rhonchi. Systemic symptoms (e.g., fever, chills, malaise) are rare.
- Often preceded by an upper respiratory tract virus, such as rhinovirus, coronavirus or influenza virus.
- Bacterial causes are rare but can include *S. pneumoniae, H. influenzae* or atypical pathogens (e.g., *Mycoplasma pneumoniae).*
- Diagnosis is made by ruling out other causes of acute cough (e.g., pneumonia, COPD exacerbation). Chest X-ray findings are typically normal and cultures are not routinely performed.
- Antibiotics are not recommended. The symptoms are generally self-limiting and can be managed with supportive care (e.g., cough suppressant, expectorant, analgesic).

PERTUSSIS

Acute bronchitis caused by *Bordetella pertussis* (commonly known as whooping cough) can be distinguished from other causes of bronchitis by the characteristic series of forceful coughs followed by an inspiratory "whoop" sound. Diagnosis can be confirmed with a nasopharyngeal swab culture or PCR test for *B. pertussis*.

Pertussis is highly contagious and should be treated with macrolides (azithromycin, clarithromycin), which are highly effective at eradicating *B. pertussis* and preventing transmission to vulnerable populations (e.g., infants).

ACUTE BACTERIAL EXACERBATION OF COPD

- COPD is often diagnosed in older patients who have a history of smoking. The Global Initiative for Chronic Obstructive Lung Disease (GOLD) guideline defines a COPD exacerbation as an increase in symptoms that worsen over < 14 days.
- The three cardinal symptoms of a COPD exacerbation are: increased dyspnea, increased sputum volume and increased sputum purulence.
- Exacerbations can be triggered by viral or bacterial (e.g., *H. influenzae, M. catarrhalis, S. pneumoniae*) infections, air pollution or an unknown cause.
- Supportive treatment (e.g., oxygen, systemic steroids, inhaled bronchodilators) is often adequate, but antibiotics should be administered to patients who meet select criteria (see below).

MANAGEMENT OF ACUTE COPD EXACERBATION

Supportive treatment (e.g., oxygen, short-acting inhaled bronchodilators, IV or PO steroids)

↓

Antibiotics for 5-7 days if any one of the following are met:

- All three cardinal symptoms present: ↑ dyspnea, ↑ sputum volume and ↑ sputum purulence
- ↑ sputum purulence* + 1 additional symptom
- Mechanically ventilated

↓

Preferred antibiotics:

- Amoxicillin/clavulanate
- Azithromycin
- Doxycycline
- Respiratory quinolone

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**Purulent sputum is thick and often yellow or green. If sputum purulence is increased, only 1 additional cardinal symptom (↑ dyspnea or ↑ sputum volume) is needed to justify antibiotic treatment.*

COMMUNITY-ACQUIRED PNEUMONIA

Community-acquired pneumonia (CAP) is a lung infection contracted outside of healthcare facilities that can be caused by bacteria, viruses or fungi (rare). Most bacterial infections are caused by *S. pneumoniae*, *H. influenzae* or atypical pathogens (e.g., *Mycoplasma pneumoniae*, *Chlamydophila pneumoniae*).

Common pneumonia symptoms include shortness of breath, fever, cough with purulent sputum, pleuritic chest pain, rales (crackling noises in the lungs), tachypnea (increased respiratory rate) and decreased breath sounds. A chest X-ray is the gold standard diagnostic test and will have "infiltrates," "opacities" or "consolidations" to indicate pneumonia.

When symptoms are mild (e.g., patient is not hospitalized and able to complete daily activities), it can be called "walking pneumonia."

Antibiotic regimens for CAP cover the likely causative pathogens, including resistant strains. The spectrum of activity of the specific antibiotic must be considered rather than using class trends (e.g., ciprofloxacin is not used for CAP; it is not a respiratory quinolone as it does not reliably cover *S. pneumoniae*). The usual duration of treatment for CAP is 5 – 7 days.

OUTPATIENT CAP TREATMENT

The outpatient treatment of CAP requires an assessment of patient comorbidities that increase the risk of antibiotic resistance (e.g., drug-resistant *S. pneumoniae*) and warrant broader coverage.

The Study Tip Gal below and the Case Scenario on the following page describe a stepwise approach for selecting an empiric CAP regimen based on patient-specific criteria and known safety issues with select drugs/drug classes (as detailed in the Infectious Diseases I chapter).

OUTPATIENT CAP ASSESSMENT AND TREATMENT

Step 1: Look for comorbidities (chronic heart, lung, liver or renal disease; diabetes mellitus; alcohol use disorder; malignancy; or asplenia)

Step 2: Decide if the patient falls into the category of "Healthy" or "High Risk" (see below)

Step 3: Choose one option within the assigned category; be sure to look for allergies, drug-disease interactions (e.g., quinolones and seizures), drug-drug interactions (e.g., QT prolongation) and culture results (if available)

PATIENT CHARACTERISTICS	RECOMMENDED EMPIRIC REGIMEN
Healthy (no comorbidities, see Step 1 above)	■ Amoxicillin high-dose (1 gram TID), or ■ Doxycycline, or ■ Macrolide (azithromycin or clarithromycin) if local pneumococcal resistance is < 25%
High Risk (with comorbidities, see Step 1 above)	■ Beta-lactam + macrolide or doxycycline □ Amoxicillin/clavulanate or cephalosporin (e.g., cefpodoxime, cefuroxime) plus □ Macrolide or doxycycline ■ Respiratory quinolone monotherapy □ Moxifloxacin or levofloxacin

CASE SCENARIO

RP is a 46-year-old female who presents to the urgent care clinic with shortness of breath, productive cough and a temperature of 100.8°F. A chest X-ray reveals a left lower lobe infiltrate. Her past medical history includes back pain and schizophrenia; she has a penicillin allergy (hives). Her scheduled medications include ziprasidone 40 mg PO BID and trazodone 50 mg PO QHS. Which empiric antibiotic regimen should RP receive for pneumonia?

Stepwise approach: RP's past medical history does not include any of the chronic comorbidities listed in Step 1. She is not at risk for drug-resistant *S. pneumoniae* and can be treated per the "Healthy" patient category. The choice is between high-dose amoxicillin, doxycycline or a macrolide. Amoxicillin should be avoided given her penicillin allergy. Macrolides can prolong the QT interval. Since ziprasidone and trazodone can also prolong the QT interval, causing additive risk, doxycycline would be the best choice in this patient with outpatient CAP.

INPATIENT CAP TREATMENT

Selection of an empiric regimen is based on the severity of illness and often includes IV antibiotics initially.

Non-severe (admission to a general medicine unit):

- Beta-lactam + macrolide or doxycycline
  - Preferred beta-lactams: ceftriaxone, ceftaroline or ampicillin/sulbactam
- Respiratory quinolone monotherapy

Severe (admission to the ICU):

- Beta-lactam + macrolide
- Beta-lactam + respiratory quinolone (do not use quinolone monotherapy)

Risk factors for *Pseudomonas* and/or MRSA:

- MRSA (prior respiratory isolation or positive nasal swab): add coverage with vancomycin or linezolid
- *Pseudomonas* (prior respiratory isolation): use a beta-lactam antibiotic with activity against *Pseudomonas,* such as piperacillin/tazobactam, cefepime, ceftazidime, imipenem/cilastatin or meropenem
- Hospitalization and use of parenteral antibiotics in the past 90 days: use a regimen with antibiotics active against both MRSA and *Pseudomonas*

HOSPITAL-ACQUIRED AND VENTILATOR-ASSOCIATED PNEUMONIA

Hospital-acquired pneumonia (HAP) has an onset > 48 hours after hospital admission. HAP is the leading infectious cause of death in ICU patients.

Ventilator-associated pneumonia (VAP) occurs > 48 hours after the start of mechanical ventilation and can lead to a prolonged duration of ventilation and hospitalization. The incidence of VAP can be reduced by proper hand-washing, elevating the head of the bed ≥ 30 degrees, weaning off the ventilator and removing nasogastric (NG) tubes if possible, and discontinuing unnecessary stress ulcer prophylaxis (e.g., proton pump inhibitor).

COMMON PATHOGENS IN HAP AND VAP

Nosocomial pathogens are common in HAP and VAP. The risk for MRSA and MDR gram-negative rods, including *P. aeruginosa, Acinetobacter* spp., *Enterobacter* spp., *E. coli* and *Klebsiella* spp., is increased.

TREATMENT OF HAP AND VAP

The degree of risk guides empiric treatment. The Study Tip Gal on the following page lists the recommended antibiotics for coverage of MRSA and *Pseudomonas* in HAP and VAP. Treat for 7 days; shorter or longer treatment durations may be indicated based on clinical, radiologic and laboratory parameters.

HAP/VAP: SELECTING AN EMPIRIC REGIMEN

All patients need an antibiotic for *Pseudomonas* and MSSA

- Examples:
  - Cefepime
  - Piperacillin/tazobactam
  - Levofloxacin

Add vancomycin or linezolid if risk for MRSA

- Risk factors: IV antibiotic use in the past 90 days, MRSA prevalence in hospital unit is > 20% or unknown, prior MRSA infection or positive MRSA nasal swab
- Example regimens:
  - Cefepime + vancomycin
  - Meropenem + linezolid
  - Aztreonam + vancomycin

Use two antibiotics for *Pseudomonas* if risk for MDR gram-negative pathogens

- Risk factors: IV antibiotic use in the past 90 days, prevalence of gram-negative resistance in hospital unit is > 10%, hospitalized ≥ 5 days prior to the onset of VAP
- Example regimens (typically MRSA risk is also present):
  - Piperacillin/tazobactam + ciprofloxacin + vancomycin
  - Cefepime + gentamicin + linezolid

Antibiotics for *Pseudomonas* (do not use two beta-lactams together):

- Beta-lactams: piperacillin/tazobactam, cefepime, ceftazidime, imipenem/cilastatin, meropenem
- Levofloxacin or ciprofloxacin
- Aztreonam
- Aminoglycosides (typically tobramycin)*

**Aminoglycosides are always used in combination with another antipseudomonal drug.*

TUBERCULOSIS

Tuberculosis (TB) is caused by *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* (MTB), an aerobic, non-spore forming bacillus. It primarily infects the lungs but can disseminate (spread) to other organs. The disease has two phases: latent (also called TB infection) and active (also called TB disease).

With latent disease, the immune system contains the infection and the patient lacks symptoms. Active pulmonary TB is transmitted by aerosolized droplets (e.g., sneezing, coughing, talking) and is highly contagious. It most often presents with cough, hemoptysis (coughing up blood), purulent sputum, fever, night sweats and unintentional weight loss. Hospitalized patients require isolation in a single negative-pressure room and healthcare workers must wear a respirator mask (e.g., N95 face mask).

LATENT TUBERCULOSIS DIAGNOSIS

Latent disease can be diagnosed using the tuberculin skin test (TST), also called a purified protein derivative (PPD) test, or an interferon-gamma release assay (IGRA) blood test. With a TST, a solution is injected intradermally and the skin area is inspected for induration (a raised area) 48 – 72 hours later (see criteria for a positive result in the box to the right). The IGRA does not require a follow-up visit and is preferred in patients with a history of bacille Calmette-Guerin (BCG) vaccination (used in countries with high TB rates) because a false-positive TST can occur in these patients. Any patient with a positive TST or IGRA test should be screened for the presence of active TB (e.g., clinical symptoms, chest X-ray) before latent TB treatment is initiated.

DIAGNOSIS OF LATENT TB: CRITERIA FOR POSITIVE TB SKIN TEST RESULTS

≥ 5 mm induration
Close contacts of recent active TB cases

HIV infection

Immunosuppression (e.g., organ transplant recipients, chemotherapy)

≥ 10 mm induration
Immigrants from high burden countries

Clinical risk (e.g., IV drug use, diabetes)

Residents/employees of "high-risk" congregate settings (e.g., prisons, healthcare facilities, homeless shelters)

≥ 15 mm induration
Patients with no risk factors

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Induration = raised area

LATENT TUBERCULOSIS TREATMENT

Treatment of latent TB with one of the following regimens greatly reduces the risk of developing active disease and the subsequent spread to others. In general, shorter regimens (e.g., 3 or 4 months) are preferred in most adults due to higher completion rates and less risk of hepatotoxicity compared to longer courses of isoniazid (INH).

Drug interactions are the biggest barrier to rifampin- and rifapentine-based regimens (see the drug table on the following page).

Regimen Options:

- INH and rifapentine once weekly for 12 weeks via directly observed therapy (DOT) or self-administered. Do not use this regimen in pregnant patients (fetal risk with rifapentine unknown).
- INH with rifampin daily for 3 months.
- Rifampin 600 mg daily for 4 months.
- INH 300 mg daily for 6 or 9 months.
  - ☐ May be preferred in HIV-positive patients taking antiretroviral therapy (due to a lower risk of drug interactions). If used, a 9-month course of treatment is recommended.

ACTIVE TUBERCULOSIS DIAGNOSIS

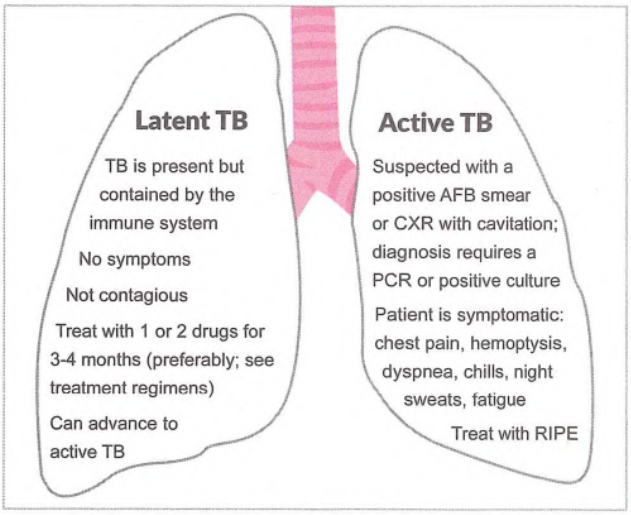
The diagnosis of active TB is based on several findings. A positive TST or IGRA is likely, but the diagnosis must be confirmed. A chest X-ray showing a consolidation or cavitation (empty space) is suggestive of TB.

Because MTB is an acid-fast bacilli (AFB), it can be detected with an AFB smear of a sputum sample; however, this test is not specific to MTB and a definitive diagnosis must be made via a sputum culture or polymerase chain reaction (PCR). MTB is a slow-growing organism; final culture and susceptibility results can take up to 6 weeks.

ACTIVE TUBERCULOSIS TREATMENT

Active TB treatment is divided into two phases (intensive and continuation). To avoid resistance, the preferred intensive phase regimen consists of four drugs: rifampin, isoniazid, pyrazinamide and ethambutol for two months (called "RIPE" therapy). In the continuation phase (at least four months), treatment is reduced to two drugs (commonly rifampin and isoniazid) depending on the drug susceptibility of the isolate.

Daily treatment or DOT (in-person or via video) 5 times weekly is recommended for all patients to increase medication adherence.



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An alternative four-month regimen includes isoniazid, rifapentine, moxifloxacin and pyrazinamide for 8 weeks, followed by isoniazid, rifapentine and moxifloxacin for 9 weeks. This provides a shorter treatment duration and avoids ocular toxicity from ethambutol, but the overall pill burden is higher and the risk of adverse effects and drug interactions with moxifloxacin should be considered.

If TB is resistant to both isoniazid and rifampin, it is called multidrug-resistant TB (MDR-TB). For MDR-TB or extensively drug-resistant TB (XDR-TB), regimens compromised of second-line agents (e.g., bedaquiline, pretomanid, streptomycin, linezolid) may be used and longer treatment durations may be necessary (e.g., up to 24 months).

PREFERRED ACTIVE TB REGIMEN (TOTAL TREATMENT DURATION: 6 MONTHS)

Intensive Phase	
4 drugs for 2 months (until culture & susceptibility results available)	RIPE: Rifampin (RIF) + Isoniazid (INH) + Pyrazinamide (PZA) + Ethambutol Daily or 5 times per week (using DOT)
Continuation Phase	
2 drugs for 4 months (based on culture & susceptibility results)	INH and RIF; Daily or 5 times per week (using DOT)

RIPE Therapy for Active TB

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Rifampin *(Rifadin)*	10 mg/kg (max 600 mg) PO daily Doses differ for other indications Take on an empty stomach	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Do not use with protease inhibitors **SIDE EFFECTS** ↑ LFTs, hemolytic anemia (detected with a positive Coombs test), flu-like syndrome, GI upset, rash/pruritus Orange-red discoloration of body secretions (saliva, urine, sweat, tears); can stain contact lenses, clothing and bedsheets **NOTES** Rifampin has many drug-drug interactions (see Drug Interactions on next page); rifabutin has fewer drug interactions and can replace rifampin in some cases (e.g., HIV patients taking protease inhibitors)
Isoniazid	5 mg/kg (max 300 mg) PO daily Take on an empty stomach Use pyridoxine (vitamin B6) 25-50 mg PO daily to ↓ INH-associated peripheral neuropathy	**BOXED WARNING** Severe (and fatal) hepatitis **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Active liver disease, previous severe adverse reaction to isoniazid **WARNINGS** Peripheral neuropathy, ↑ risk if predisposed to neuropathy (e.g., HIV, diabetes, renal failure, alcohol use disorder, malnourished) **SIDE EFFECTS** ↑ LFTs (usually asymptomatic), drug-induced lupus erythematosus (DILE), hemolytic anemia (detected with a positive Coombs test), agranulocytosis, aplastic anemia, hyperglycemia, headache, GI upset, pancreatitis, severe skin reactions (SJS/DRESS), optic neuritis
Pyrazinamide	1-2 grams PO daily (varies based on weight) CrCl < 30 mL/min: extend interval	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Acute gout, severe hepatic damage **SIDE EFFECTS** ↑ LFTs, hyperuricemia/gout, GI upset, malaise, arthralgia, myalgia, rash
Ethambutol *(Myambutol)*	800-1,600 mg PO daily (varies based on weight) CrCl < 50 mL/min: extend interval	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Optic neuritis (risk vs. benefit decision); do not use in young children, unconscious patients or anyone who cannot report visual changes **SIDE EFFECTS** ↑ LFTs, optic neuritis (dose-related), ↓ visual acuity, partial loss of vision/blind spot and/or color blindness (usually reversible), rash, headache, confusion, hallucinations, N/V

RIFAMPIN DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Rifampin is a potent inducer of CYP450 1A2, 2C8, 2C9, 2C19, 3A4 and P-glycoprotein. It can significantly ↓ the concentration and therapeutic effect of other drugs, including:
  - ☐ Protease inhibitors (substitute rifabutin).
  - ☐ Warfarin (a very large ↓ in INR is common and increased doses of warfarin are required).
  - ☐ Oral contraceptives (↓ efficacy; requires backup contraceptive methods).
- Do not use rifampin with apixaban, rivaroxaban, edoxaban, or dabigatran.
- It is important to screen the medication profile for drug interactions with rifampin and consider if rifabutin is an acceptable alternative. See the Drug Interactions chapter for more information.

RIPE THERAPY FOR TB

ALL RIPE DRUGS
↑ LFTs, including total bilirubin – monitor

Rifampin
Orange bodily secretions

Strong CYP450 inducer

Flu-like symptoms

Isoniazid
Peripheral neuropathy: prevent with pyridoxine (vitamin B6) 25-50 mg PO daily

Monitor for symptoms of DILE

Rifampin and Isoniazid
Risk for hemolytic anemia (identified with a positive Coombs test)

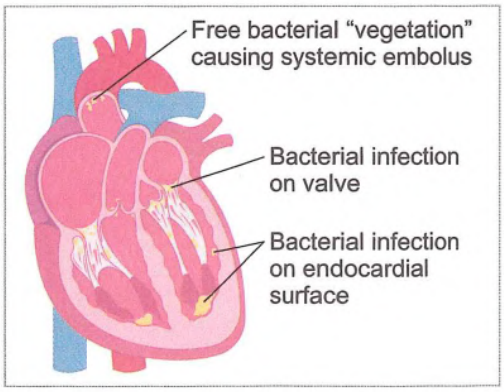
Pyrazinamide
↑ uric acid – do not use with acute gout

Ethambutol
Visual damage (requires baseline and monthly vision exams)

Confusion/hallucinations

INFECTIVE ENDOCARDITIS

An infection of the inner tissue of the heart, typically the heart valves, is called infective endocarditis (IE). Patients who have prosthetic heart valves, chronic IV access, IV drug use or frequent healthcare exposure are most at risk. Most patients present with fever, with or without a heart murmur. IE is diagnosed using the Modified Duke Criteria, which includes an echocardiogram to visualize the vegetation and positive blood cultures. The most common species of organisms that cause IE are staphylococci, streptococci and enterococci.



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IE can be fatal if left untreated. Empiric treatment often includes vancomycin and ceftriaxone. Definitive treatment, including antibiotic duration, is dependent on the pathogen, the type valve infected (native or prosthetic) and culture susceptibility results. In general, 4 – 6 weeks of IV antibiotic treatment is required.

Adding an antibiotic (e.g., gentamicin) for synergy is recommended for infections that are more difficult to eradicate, such as with prosthetic valve infections or more resistant organisms; traditional dosing (e.g., 1 mg/kg IV Q8H) is often used to target peak levels of 3 – 4 mcg/mL and trough levels < 1 mcg/mL. In some cases, the risk of nephrotoxicity outweighs the benefit and an aminoglycoside is not used.

Some bacteria form a biofilm (a surrounding protective layer), especially on prosthetic valves. This is difficult for some antibiotics to penetrate. Rifampin may be used for staphylococcal prosthetic valve endocarditis due to its ability to treat organisms in a biofilm.

INFECTIVE ENDOCARDITIS TREATMENT

ORGANISM	PREFERRED ANTIBIOTIC REGIMEN
Viridans group streptococci	Penicillin or ceftriaxone (± gentamicin) If beta-lactam allergy, use vancomycin monotherapy
Staphylococci (MSSA)	Nafcillin or cefazolin (+ gentamicin and rifampin if prosthetic valve) If beta-lactam allergy, use vancomycin* (+ gentamicin and rifampin if prosthetic valve)
Staphylococci (MRSA)	Vancomycin* (+ gentamicin and rifampin if prosthetic valve)
Enterococci	For both native and prosthetic valve IE: penicillin or ampicillin + gentamicin, or ampicillin + high-dose ceftriaxone If beta-lactam allergy, use vancomycin + gentamicin If VRE, use daptomycin or linezolid

**Daptomycin monotherapy is an alternative for MSSA and MRSA IE when the patient has a beta-lactam allergy and no prosthetic valve.*

INFECTIVE ENDOCARDITIS DENTAL PROPHYLAXIS

The mouth contains bacteria that can enter the blood during dental procedures. The bacteria can travel to the heart, where they can settle on the myocardial lining, a heart valve or a blood vessel. IE after dental procedures is rare, but the risk is increased with certain cardiac conditions. In patients at high risk, antibiotics should be taken before all dental procedures that involve manipulation of gingival tissue (gums), the periapical region (near the root of the tooth) or perforation of the oral mucosa. Example procedures include root canals and tooth extractions (not routine cleanings). The table below describes the risk criteria and recommended prophylaxis regimens.

PATIENTS AT HIGH RISK FOR IE	ADULT PROPHYLAXIS REGIMENS*
Dental work needed, such as a root canal **+** **Select cardiac conditions, including:** ■ Prosthetic heart valve or heart valve repaired with artificial material ■ History of endocarditis ■ Heart transplant with abnormal heart valve function ■ Certain congenital heart defects including heart/heart valve disease	Administer one dose 30-60 minutes before the procedure **First line:** Amoxicillin 2 grams PO **If unable to take oral medication:** Ampicillin 2 grams IM/IV, or Cefazolin or ceftriaxone 1 gram IM/IV **If able to take oral medication but allergic to penicillin**:** Azithromycin or clarithromycin 500 mg, or Doxycycline 100 mg

mariaaverburg/stock.adobe.com

**In pediatric patients, use weight-based doses of the same antibiotics.*

***In practice, cephalosporins may be considered if penicillin reaction is mild (no history of anaphylaxis, angioedema or urticaria); on the exam, look for a safer option.*

INTRA-ABDOMINAL INFECTIONS

SPONTANEOUS BACTERIAL PERITONITIS

Spontaneous bacterial peritonitis (SBP), or primary peritonitis, is an infection of the peritoneal space that often occurs in patients with cirrhosis and ascites. Infection is suspected if an ascitic fluid sample (collected via a paracentesis) reveals ≥ 250 cells/mm^3 PMNs (polymorphonuclear leukocytes).

Empiric treatment with ceftriaxone for 5 – 7 days is recommended to target the likely pathogens (streptococci, *Proteus, E. coli, Klebsiella)*. Alternatively, a carbapenem (e.g., meropenem) can be used in critically ill patients or those at risk for MDR pathogens. Patients treated for an initial SBP episode should be prescribed secondary prophylaxis with SMX/TMP or a quinolone (e.g., ciprofloxacin) to ↓ the risk of future infections.

OTHER INTRA-ABDOMINAL INFECTIONS

Common intra-abdominal infections encountered in clinical practice include appendicitis, cholecystitis (acute inflammation of the gallbladder due to an obstructive stone), cholangitis (infection of the common bile duct), secondary peritonitis (caused by ulceration, ischemia, obstruction or surgery) and diverticulitis.

If an abscess is present, it should be drained (referred to as source control) and sent for culture. Since intra-abdominal infections are usually polymicrobial, empiric antibiotic treatment should target multiple pathogens, including streptococci, enteric gram-negatives and anaerobes (e.g., *Bacteroides fragilis)*. If there is risk of MDR pathogens (e.g., critically ill, hospitalized > 48 hrs, antibiotics in past 90 days), coverage of *Pseudomonas* and other resistant organisms may be necessary.

Treatment can be accomplished with a single drug in some cases. If the antibiotic selected does not have anaerobic activity, an additional antibiotic (usually metronidazole) must be added (see the Infectious Diseases I chapter for a discussion of antibiotic spectrum of activity).

A treatment duration of 4 – 5 days is usually sufficient if source control is accomplished. Longer durations may be necessary in select patients (e.g., secondary bacteremia, lack of source control, immunosuppressed).

TREATMENT OPTIONS FOR INTRA-ABDOMINAL INFECTIONS

COMMUNITY-ACQUIRED (LOW RISK)	RISK FOR RESISTANT OR NOSOCOMIAL PATHOGENS*
Cover PEK, anaerobes, streptococci	**Cover PEK, *Pseudomonas, Enterobacter*, anaerobes, streptococci ± enterococci**
Possible regimens include:	Possible regimens include:
Ertapenem	Carbapenem (except ertapenem)
Moxifloxacin	Piperacillin/tazobactam
(Cefuroxime or ceftriaxone) + metronidazole	(Cefepime or ceftazidime) + metronidazole
(Ciprofloxacin or levofloxacin) + metronidazole	

**Ampicillin or vancomycin may be added to a cephalosporin-based regimen if Enterococcus coverage is needed; vancomycin may be included in the regimen if there is risk of MRSA.*
PEK (enteric GNRs) = *Proteus, E. coli, Klebsiella*

SKIN AND SOFT-TISSUE INFECTIONS (SSTIs)

Skin and soft-tissue infections (SSTIs) can involve any or all layers of the skin (epidermis, dermis and subcutaneous fat), as well as underlying fascia and muscle. SSTIs usually result from the introduction of bacteria (e.g., staphylococci, streptococci) through breaks in the skin barrier, and less frequently from an infection that spreads from the bloodstream to the skin. The provoking event can be minor skin trauma (e.g., cuts, abrasions, insect bites) that subsequently progresses to a deeper infection.

SSTIs can be broadly divided into infections that are superficial (e.g., impetigo, furuncle, carbuncle) or infections that penetrate the subcutaneous tissues (e.g., cellulitis). They can be nonpurulent or purulent (contains pus), such as with an abscess. The severity of the infection (mild, moderate or severe) impacts the choice of antibiotics and the route (topical, PO or IV).

SSTI CLASSIFICATIONS

Mild infection
Systemic signs absent

Moderate infection
Systemic signs present

Systemic signs:
Temperature > 100.4°F
Heart rate > 90 BPM
WBC > 12,000 or < 4000 cells/mm^3

Severe infection
Systemic signs or signs of a deeper infection (e.g., fluid-filled blisters, skin sloughing, hypotension, evidence of organ dysfunction) are present, patient is immunocompromised or failed oral antibiotics + incision and drainage (for purulent infections).

Empiric antibiotics used for the outpatient treatment of common SSTIs are listed in the table below. The list represents frequently used antibiotics and is not all-inclusive.

OUTPATIENT TREATMENT OF COMMON SKIN AND SOFT-TISSUE INFECTIONS

INFECTION	PRESENTATION	TREATMENT/COMMENTS
Superficial Infections		
Impetigo *S. pyogenes, S. aureus* (most often MSSA) FotoHelin/Shutterstock.com	Common in children (contagious, spreads quickly). A blister-like rash (may be itchy or painful) found anywhere on the skin, usually around the nose, mouth, hands and arms. Pustules rupture and produce a thick, yellowish, clear fluid that dries and forms honey-colored crusts over the area.	Use warm, wet compresses to remove dried crusts (do not share personal towels; wash sheets, towels and clothing in hot water). **Limited, localized lesions:** Apply a topical antibiotic, typically mupirocin **Numerous, extensive lesions:** ■ Cephalexin 250-500 mg PO QID ■ Dicloxacillin 250-500 mg PO QID
Folliculitis/furuncle/ carbuncle *S. aureus*, including community-acquired MRSA (CA-MRSA) Alessandro Grandini/ stock.adobe.com	Folliculitis: superficial infection of hair follicles (looks like red pimples). Furuncle (boil): purulent infection of the hair follicle. Carbuncle: group of infected furuncles.	Folliculitis and small furuncles may require only warm compresses to ↓ inflammation and help with drainage. Incision & drainage (I&D) ± antibiotics is recommended for large furuncles and carbuncles. **Use an antibiotic that covers MSSA and MRSA:** ■ SMX/TMP DS 1-2 tablets PO BID ■ Doxycycline 100 mg PO BID Occasionally, folliculitis is due to a fungal infection and can be treated with ketoconazole cream.

INFECTION	PRESENTATION	TREATMENT/COMMENTS
Cellulitis (Non-Purulent Infections)		
Mild infection Streptococci, including *S. pyogenes* (Group A *Streptococcus)*, *S. aureus* Blueee77/Shutterstock.com	Mild symptoms: localized pain, swelling, redness, warmth. Often occurs on the leg, generally unilateral, and can rapidly spread/expand.	**Antibiotic must be active against streptococci and MSSA:** ■ Cephalexin 500 mg PO QID ■ Dicloxacillin 500 mg PO QID ■ Beta-lactam allergy: clindamycin 300 mg PO QID Duration of treatment: 5 days (longer if no improvement within 5 days).
Abscess (Purulent Infections)		
Mild infection Commonly caused by *S. aureus,* including CA-MRSA Criniger kolio/Shutterstock.com	Initially appears as a localized fluid collection (abscess). Recurrent MRSA infections: consider nasal decolonization with nasal mupirocin, and skin decolonization with chlorhexidine or dilute bleach.	Source control with I&D of pus is recommended. **Use an antibiotic that covers MSSA and MRSA:** ■ SMX/TMP DS 1-2 tablets PO BID ■ Doxycycline 100 mg PO BID ■ Minocycline 200 mg PO × 1, then 100 mg PO BID ■ Clindamycin 300 mg PO QID ■ Linezolid 600 mg PO BID If cultures show MSSA, use cephalexin.

SEVERE SKIN AND SOFT TISSUE INFECTIONS

Severe infections or those in more complicated patients (e.g., failed initial treatment, immunocompromised) can lead to sepsis, requiring hospitalization and IV antibiotics.

INFECTION	NOTES	TREATMENT
Severe purulent	Duration of therapy: 7-14 days	Use antibiotics with MRSA activity: ■ Vancomycin (goal trough 10-15 mcg/mL) ■ Daptomycin ■ Linezolid ■ Others: ceftaroline, tedizolid, telavancin Once clinically stable, transition to PO antibiotics
Necrotizing fasciitis (severe nonpurulent) *S. pyogenes* (Group A *Streptococcus), S. aureus* (including MRSA), anaerobes (e.g., *Clostridium* spp.) and gram-negatives (e.g., *E. coli)*	A life-threatening, fast-moving skin infection that rapidly destroys tissue and can quickly penetrate muscle. Presentation: intense pain/tenderness over affected skin and underlying muscle (often out of proportion with clinical findings), skin discoloration, edema, systemic signs. Requires emergency treatment in a hospital.	Urgent surgical debridement. Empiric therapy is broad: Vancomycin or daptomycin + beta-lactam (piperacillin/tazobactam, meropenem) + clindamycin (to suppress streptococcal toxin production)

DIABETIC FOOT INFECTIONS

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Most common cause of amputations. Starts in soft tissue, can spread into bone (osteomyelitis). Proper foot care is crucial to avoid infections.

Patients with diabetes are at high risk for foot ulcers because of neuropathic damage, compromised blood flow to the lower extremities (due to peripheral artery disease) and poor wound healing (due to hyperglycemia). It is imperative that patients follow recommendations for proper foot care (see the Diabetes chapter) because ulcers can progress to foot infections (with erythema, edema and purulent discharge), which can lead to amputation.

Mild superficial infections without systemic symptoms can be treated with similar oral antibiotic regimens as mild SSTIs (see table on previous page). Patients with recent antibiotic exposure or moderate to severe presentations (e.g., requiring hospitalization) typically have polymicrobial infections and broad-spectrum empiric antibiotics targeting gram-positive and gram-negative organisms are necessary (see table below). The ability to select a regimen that targets these pathogens, and possibly MDR organisms (e.g., MRSA, *Pseudomonas)* and/or anaerobes, is essential for the exam. Cultures should be performed in order to narrow therapy whenever possible.

ETIOLOGY	GRAM-POSITIVE	GRAM-NEGATIVE
Aerobic	*S. aureus* (including MRSA) Group A *Streptococcus* Viridans group streptococci *S. epidermidis*	*E. coli* *Klebsiella pneumoniae* *Proteus mirabilis* *Enterobacter cloacae* *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* (if water exposure)
Anaerobic (if limb ischemia or necrosis present)	*Peptostreptococcus* *Clostridium perfringens*	*Bacteroides fragilis* and others

SELECT TREATMENT REGIMENS FOR MODERATE TO SEVERE DIABETIC FOOT INFECTIONS

TYPE OF REGIMEN	TREATMENT OPTIONS	NOTES
No MRSA activity needed	Ampicillin/sulbactam Ertapenem Ceftriaxone Levofloxacin or moxifloxacin	Start with IV then transition to PO **Treatment duration** ■ 2-4 weeks (if no bone involvement) ■ 4-6 weeks for osteomyelitis (i.e., bone involvement), typically with IV antibiotics ■ 2-5 days if amputation with no residual infection
Pseudomonas and/or MDR gram-negative activity needed	Piperacillin/tazobactam Cefepime Meropenem, doripenem or imipenem/cilastatin	
MRSA activity needed	Add vancomycin, daptomycin or linezolid	
Anaerobic activity needed	Use a regimen with anaerobic activity (e.g., beta-lactam/beta-lactamase inhibitor combination, carbapenem) or add metronidazole	

URINARY TRACT INFECTIONS (UTIs)

Acute cystitis is an uncomplicated lower urinary tract infection (UTI) affecting the bladder and urethra. It is more common than upper UTIs, which occur in the kidneys (pyelonephritis) and are more severe. UTIs are more common in females than males because the shorter female urethra provides an easier route for organisms to reach the bladder. Sexual intercourse can facilitate this movement; females who commonly develop UTIs after intercourse may be prescribed prophylactic antibiotics.

UTIs in males are typically due to an abnormality or obstruction, such as an enlarged prostate. Other conditions that increase the risk of infection include neurogenic bladder (e.g., spinal cord injury, stroke, multiple sclerosis), an obstruction (e.g., a kidney stone) or the presence of an indwelling catheter (see the Medication Safety & Quality Improvement chapter for ways to reduce catheter-associated infections).

Cystitis can be diagnosed based on symptoms (see box below). A urinalysis can aid in the diagnosis and is considered positive when there is pyuria (WBC > 10 cells/mm^3), bacteria and positive leukocyte esterase and/or nitrites.

The presence of bacteria alone is not indicative of a UTI and does not require treatment (exception: asymptomatic bacteriuria in pregnancy). A positive urinalysis can be followed by a urine culture to identify a causative organism (see common pathogens in the table on the following page).

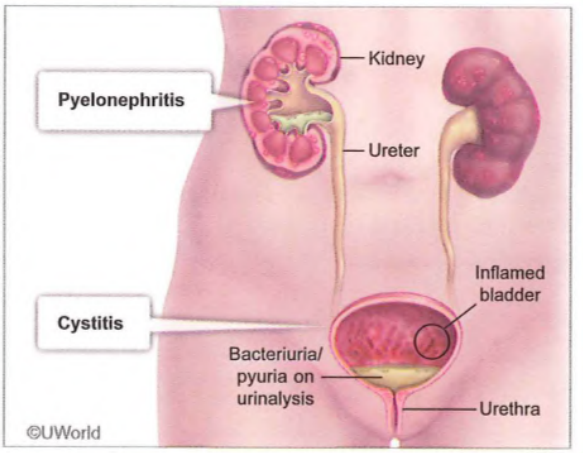
UTI SYMPTOMS

Cystitis (Lower UTI)

- Urgency and frequency (the feeling of needing to go often and quickly), including overnight (nocturia)
- Dysuria (painful urination, burning)
- Suprapubic tenderness
- Hematuria (blood in the urine)

Pyelonephritis (Upper UTI)

- Flank/costovertebral angle pain
- Abdominal pain, nausea and vomiting
- Fever, chills and malaise



UTI TREATMENT

DIAGNOSIS	DRUGS OF CHOICE	COMMENTS
Acute cystitis Common pathogens: *E. coli* (vast majority), *Proteus, Klebsiella, Staphylococcus saprophyticus,* enterococci	Nitrofurantoin *(Macrobid)* 100 mg PO BID × 5 days (contraindicated if CrCl < 60 mL/min) or SMX/TMP DS 1 tablet PO BID × 3 days (do not use if sulfa allergy or ≥ 20% *E. coli* resistance rate) or Fosfomycin 3 grams PO × 1 dose or Pivmecillinam 185 mg PO TID × 3-7 days **Alternative Options** Beta-lactam (amoxicillin/clavulanate or cephalosporin) × 5-7 days or Ciprofloxacin 250 mg PO BID × 3 days* or Levofloxacin 250 mg PO daily × 3 days* **Quinolones: do not use in children, pregnant patients, those with seizures, neuropathy or QT prolongation risk; watch for tendinitis/rupture and BG changes.*	Usually treated empirically in the outpatient setting. If no response with first-line treatment, check a urine culture and treat accordingly. Do not use moxifloxacin for UTIs (does not reach high levels in urine). Prophylaxis (if ≥ 3 episodes in 1 year): SMX/TMP SS 1 tablet daily, nitrofurantoin 50 mg daily or SMX/TMP DS 1 tablet after sexual intercourse. Last-line option (in adult females with acute cystitis caused by gram-negative pathogens resistant to all other drug classes): Sulopenem/probenecid *(Orlynvah)* See the following page for a discussion of antibiotic treatment during pregnancy.
Acute pyelonephritis Common pathogens: *E. coli, Proteus, Klebsiella* Less common pathogens: *Enterobacter, Serratia, Pseudomonas,* enterococci	**Moderately ill outpatient (PO)** If local quinolone resistance ≤ 10%: Ciprofloxacin 500 mg PO BID × 5-7 days, or Levofloxacin 750 mg PO daily × 5-7 days If local quinolone resistance > 10%: Ceftriaxone 1 gram IV/IM × 1 or ertapenem 1 gram IV/IM × 1 or aminoglycoside extended-interval dose IV/IM × 1, then continue with a quinolone (as above) × 5-7 days Concern for quinolone adverse effects: SMX/TMP or beta-lactam (amoxicillin/clavulanate, cefdinir, cefadroxil or cefpodoxime) × 7-10 days **Severely ill hospitalized patient (IV)** Initial: ceftriaxone or quinolone (ciprofloxacin or levofloxacin) Concern for resistance: piperacillin/tazobactam or a carbapenem (if ESBL-producing organism suspected) Step down to oral treatment based on culture & susceptibility results Duration: 5-10 days depending on regimen & clinical response	If there is a risk for *Pseudomonas* infection, consider piperacillin/tazobactam or an antipseudomonal carbapenem (meropenem, doripenem, imipenem/cilastatin). Last-line options for adults with pyelonephritis (or UTI with systemic signs/symptoms) and no other treatment options: Cefiderocol *(Fetroja)* Imipenem/cilastatin/relebactam *(Recarbrio)* Meropenem/vaborbactam *(Vabomere)* Plazomicin *(Zemdri)*

URINARY ANALGESIC

Phenazopyridine can help with dysuria (pain/burning with urination) but does not treat the infection.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Phenazopyridine *(Pyridium, Azo Urinary Pain Relief)* OTC and Rx	200 mg PO TID × 2 days (max) Take with 8 oz of water, with or immediately following food, to minimize stomach upset	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Do not use in patients with renal impairment or liver disease **SIDE EFFECTS** Headache, dizziness, stomach cramps **NOTES** Can cause red-orange coloring of the urine and other body fluids; contact lenses/clothes can be stained Hemolytic anemia with G6PD deficiency (discontinue if hemolysis occurs)

orange urine color

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ASYMPTOMATIC BACTERIURIA IN PREGNANCY

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Asymptomatic bacteriuria (≥ 10^5 bacteria/mL on a urinalysis) in pregnant people must be treated. If not treated, it can lead to pyelonephritis, premature birth and perinatal mortality. Antibiotic treatment options are similar to those recommended for the treatment of cystitis during pregnancy and include:

- Beta-lactams (preferred): amoxicillin ± clavulanate or an oral cephalosporin (e.g., cephalexin).
- Nitrofurantoin, SMX/TMP or fosfomycin are alternatives in patients with a beta-lactam allergy.
  - The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) suggests avoiding nitrofurantoin and SMX/TMP in the 1st trimester, and warns of their risks if used later in pregnancy (SMX/TMP can cause hyperbilirubinemia or kernicterus in the baby if used close to delivery; nitrofurantoin can cause hemolytic anemia in the baby if used in the 3rd trimester).
- Quinolones should be avoided due to cartilage toxicity and arthropathies (see Infectious Diseases I chapter).

CLOSTRIDIOIDES DIFFICILE INFECTION

The GI tract contains > 1,000 species of organisms as part of the normal flora. Antibiotics can eliminate many "healthy" bacteria, allowing an overgrowth of *Clostridioides difficile*, a gram-positive, obligate anaerobic, spore-forming rod. Some types of *C. difficile* release toxins A and B that attack the intestinal lining, causing colitis. Symptoms of *C. difficile* infection (CDI) include at least three, watery stools per day, abdominal cramps, fever and an elevated white blood cell count. CDI can lead to pseudomembranous colitis, which can progress to toxic megacolon and result in the need for colectomy or death. Risk factors include recent healthcare exposure, use of proton pump inhibitors, advanced age, immunocompromised state, obesity and previous CDI.

CDI TREATMENT

Treatment recommendations vary based on whether it is the first infection or a recurrence, but in general, oral vancomycin or fidaxomicin are preferred (see Study Tip Gal on the following page).

Patients with multiple CDI recurrences may be candidates for fecal microbiota transplantation, a medical procedure that introduces healthy stool (not exposed to antibiotics) into the GI tract to re-establish the intestinal microbiome. Microbiota products, including *Rebyota* (a rectal suspension of live fecal microbiota) and *Vowst* (an oral capsule containing live fecal microbiota spores), are other options to prevent future CDI episodes.

C. DIFFICILE GUIDELINE RECOMMENDATIONS*

- Discontinue unnecessary antibiotics and other possible causative agents (e.g., PPIs) if possible
- Isolate patients (in a single room with a dedicated bathroom; use contact precautions – gown and gloves)
- After patient care/visits: wash hands with soap and water (more effective than alcohol-containing hand sanitizers)
- Diagnosis: positive *C. difficile* stool toxin (enzyme immunoassay with a glutamate dehydrogenase test) or PCR

1ST EPISODE

FDX 200 mg PO BID x 10 days, or

VAN 125 mg PO QID x 10 days (standard regimen)

MET 500 mg PO TID x 10 days (option only if non-severe** and treatments above are unavailable)

2nd EPISODE (1st Recurrence)

FDX 200 mg PO BID x 10 days, or

VAN standard regimen followed by a prolonged pulse/tapered course*** (the standard regimen without a prolonged taper is acceptable if MET was used for the initial episode)

3rd OR SUBSEQUENT EPISODES

FDX 200 mg PO BID x 10 days, or

VAN standard regimen followed by a prolonged pulse/tapered course***, or

VAN standard regimen followed by rifaximin 400 mg TID x 20 days, or

Fecal microbiota transplantation

Fulminant/Complicated Disease

Diagnosed when significant systemic toxic effects are present, such as hypotension, shock, ileus or toxic megacolon; can occur with any episode/recurrence

VAN 500 mg PO/NG/PR QID + metronidazole 500 mg IV Q8H

FDX = fidaxomicin; VAN = vancomycin; MET = metronidazole

**Bezlotoxumab (a monoclonal antibody that neutralizes toxin B) is recommended by treatment guidelines to reduce CDI recurrence in select patients but it is currently unavailable in the U.S.*

***Non-severe = WBC < 15,000 cells/mm³ and SCr < 1.5 mg/dL.*

****Example vancomycin tapered and pulsed regimen = 125 mg PO QID × 10 days, BID × 1 week, daily × 1 week, then 125 mg every 2-3 days for 2-8 weeks.*

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS

Safe sex practices and education are important to prevent sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Condoms (male and female) can decrease transmission. Oral sex has a much lower risk of HIV transmission than vaginal or anal sex, but still carries a risk for herpes, syphilis, hepatitis B, gonorrhea and human papillomavirus (HPV).

Screening should be performed for timely diagnosis of STIs and prevention of complications, including cervical cancer, infertility or transmission to partners. Sexual partners should be treated concurrently to prevent re-infection, except with bacterial vaginosis. The Study Tip Gal below describes the usual symptoms associated with common STIs, and the table on the following page discusses treatment recommendations (see the Infectious Diseases III chapter for a discussion of herpes simplex virus).

In addition to providing treatment to infected individuals, the CDC recommends that healthcare providers consider prescribing post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) to select patients (e.g., men who have sex with men, transgender women) with a history of at least one STI to reduce the risk of syphilis, chlamydia and gonorrhea. The prophylactic regimen (referred to as DoxyPEP) consists of one dose of doxycycline 200 mg taken within 72 hours of sexual activity.

SYMPTOMS OF COMMON STIs

Chlamydia: genital discharge or no symptoms
Gonorrhea: genital discharge or no symptoms
Genital warts: single or multiple pink/skin-toned lesions
Latent syphilis: asymptomatic
Primary syphilis: painless, smooth genital sores (chancre)

Females only

Bacterial vaginosis: vaginal discharge (clear, white, gray) with a "fishy" odor & pH > 4.5; little pain

Trichomoniasis: yellow/green, frothy vaginal discharge with pH > 4.5; soreness, pain with intercourse

TREATMENT OF SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS

INFECTION	DRUG OF CHOICE	DOSING/ DURATION	ALTERNATIVES/NOTES
Syphilis (primary, secondary or early latent) *Treponema pallidum*, a spirochete Early latent: acquired within the past year, asymptomatic	Penicillin G benzathine *(Bicillin L-A*, do not substitute with *Bicillin C-R)*	2.4 million units IM × 1	Beta-lactam allergy ■ Doxycycline 100 mg PO BID × 14 days ■ If pregnant, nonadherent or unlikely to follow up, desensitize & treat with *Bicillin L-A* (see Study Tip Gal on next page) Diagnosis: positive non-treponemal test, such as a rapid plasma reagin (RPR) or Venereal Diseases Research Lab (VDRL) blood test, and treponemal assay
Syphilis (late latent or tertiary) Late latent: acquired > 1 year ago or unknown duration, asymptomatic	As above	2.4 million units IM weekly × 3 weeks (7.2 million units total)	Beta-lactam allergy ■ Doxycycline 100 mg PO BID × 28 days (see note above for pregnant or nonadherent patients)
Neurosyphilis Can occur at any stage of disease	Penicillin G aqueous	3-4 million units IV Q4H × 10-14 days	Penicillin G procaine Beta-lactam allergy: desensitization followed by administration of penicillin G aqueous IV
Gonorrhea *Neisseria gonorrhoeae*, a gram-negative diplococcus Commonly diagnosed via urethral, vaginal, cervical, rectal and/or pharyngeal swabs	Ceftriaxone If chlamydia has not been excluded: add doxycycline (see below)	< 150 kg: 500 mg IM × 1 ≥ 150 kg: 1 gram IM × 1	Pregnancy: treatment is the same Ceftriaxone not available: use cefixime 800 mg PO × 1 Cephalosporin allergy: use gentamicin 240 mg IM × 1 + azithromycin 2 grams PO × 1 Ceftriaxone: most effective for pharyngeal infections (if severe cephalosporin allergy, consult an ID specialist)
Chlamydia *Chlamydia trachomatis*, an intracellular obligate gram-negative organism Testing as per gonorrhea	Non-pregnant: doxycycline Pregnant: azithromycin	100 mg PO BID × 7 days 1 gram PO × 1	Erythromycin base 500 mg PO QID × 7 days, or levofloxacin 500 mg PO daily × 7 days Pregnancy: amoxicillin 500 mg TID × 7 days
Bacterial Vaginosis Many different organisms, including *Gardnerella vaginalis*	Metronidazole or Metronidazole 0.75% gel or Clindamycin 2% cream	500 mg PO BID × 7 days 1 applicator intravaginally daily × 5 days 1 applicator intravaginally at bedtime × 7 days	Clindamycin 300 mg PO BID × 7 days (or clindamycin ovules* 100 mg intravaginally at bedtime × 3 days), or Tinidazole 2 grams PO daily × 2 days (or 1 gram PO daily × 5 days), or Secnidazole 2 grams PO × 1 dose Females should not douche

INFECTION	DRUG OF CHOICE	DOSING/ DURATION	ALTERNATIVES/NOTES
Trichomoniasis *Trichomonas vaginalis*, a flagellated protozoan	Metronidazole	Females: 500 mg PO BID × 7 days Males: 2 grams PO × 1	Pregnancy: metronidazole (per package labeling) is contraindicated in the 1st trimester, but based on safety data (and the adverse outcomes associated with infection), the CDC recommends metronidazole for trichomoniasis in all trimesters
Genital Warts Human papillomavirus (HPV) strains 6 & 11 *Gardasil* vaccine ↓ risk of genital warts and cervical and other cancers (see the Immunizations chapter)	Imiquimod cream *(Zyclara)*	Apply topically to clean, dry, warty tissue and wash off in 6-10 hours Apply 3x/week until cleared (or 16 weeks)	Treatment not required if asymptomatic (warts generally resolve spontaneously within one year) Local side effects of erythema, burning, scaling, ulcers and vesicles can occur with imiquimod treatment Imiquimod cream can weaken condoms and diaphragms and irritate anogenital mucosa; patients should abstain from sexual activity while cream is on the skin

**Clindamycin ovules use a base that can weaken latex or rubber products (e.g., condoms); alternative contraception methods should be used within 72 hours of clindamycin ovules.*

SYPHILIS: PENICILLIN DESENSITIZATION REQUIRED?

Syphilis must be treated with penicillin in select patients with a penicillin allergy because the alternative, doxycycline, is not suitable and poorly studied.

- A pregnant patient cannot take doxycycline due to the adverse effects on the fetus (↓ bone growth).
- A patient with poor adherence/follow-up is at risk for treatment failure with a twice-daily doxycycline regimen that must be taken for 14-28 days.

Per the CDC, follow these steps:

1. Confirm the allergic reaction with a skin test.
2. Temporarily desensitize the patient with an approved desensitization protocol.
3. Treat with IM penicillin G benzathine *(Bicillin L-A)*.

COMMON TICKBORNE DISEASES

Tickborne infections are caused by a variety of bacteria that are carried by many ticks, fleas and lice. The diseases that commonly occur in humans are listed in the table below, along with the recommended treatments. Rocky Mountain spotted fever is the most common and most fatal of these illnesses in the U.S. Initial signs and symptoms include fever, headache, and muscle pain, followed 3 – 5 days later by an erythematous petechial rash (pinpoint or splotchy red spots caused by bleeding into the dermis).

DISEASE	ORGANISM	TREATMENT
Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever	*Rickettsia rickettsii* Gram-negative obligate intracellular bacteria	Doxycycline 100 mg PO/IV BID × 5-7 days (the drug of choice, including for pediatric patients)
Lyme Disease	*Borrelia burgdorferi, Borrelia mayonii* Spirochetes	Doxycycline 100 mg PO BID × 10 days, or Amoxicillin 500 mg PO TID × 14 days, or Cefuroxime 500 mg PO BID × 14 days
Ehrlichiosis	*Ehrlichia chaffeensis* Obligate intracellular bacteria	Doxycycline 100 mg PO/IV BID × 7-14 days

LYME DISEASE OR RINGWORM?

Lyme Disease

Bacterial (spirochete) infection
Borrelia burgdorferi and *Borrelia mayonii*, spread by ticks

Erythema migrans: a "bull's-eye" rash (round, red with central clearing as it expands), achy joints, fever

Diagnosis: enzyme immunoassay (EIA) identifies antibodies
Treatment: doxycycline 100 mg BID PO/IV

Ringworm

Fungal infection
Tinea corporis

1+ reddish, raised rings, can be itchy

Treatments: clotrimazole or another topical antifungal

Select Guidelines/References

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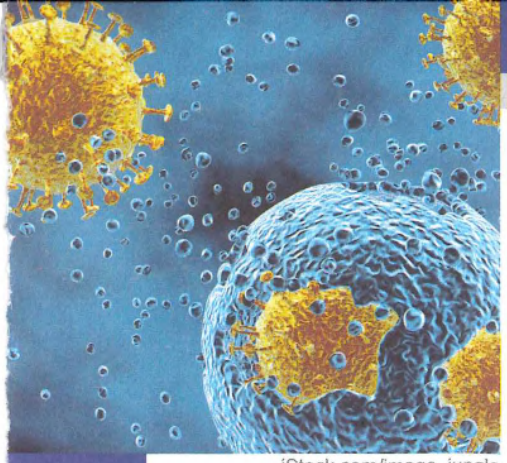
Other guidelines available from the Infectious Diseases Society of America (idsociety.org) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (cdc.gov).



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CHAPTER 24

INFECTIOUS DISEASES III: ANTIFUNGALS & ANTIVIRALS

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= Study Tip Gal

SYSTEMIC FUNGAL INFECTIONS

Fungi are classified as either yeasts, molds or dimorphic species (see box). Certain types of fungi (including yeasts such as *Candida)* can colonize body surfaces and are considered to be normal flora in the intestine. They do not normally cause serious infections unless they contaminate a sterile space (e.g., the blood) or the immune system is weakened by drugs or diseases (e.g., chemotherapy, HIV), increasing the risk of opportunistic infections (see the Infectious Diseases IV: Opportunistic Infections chapter for more information).

FUNGAL CLASSIFICATIONS

Yeasts
Candida species
C. albicans
C. tropicalis
C. parapsilosis
C. glabrata
C. krusei

Cryptococcus neoformans

Molds
Aspergillus species

Zygomycetes (Mucor and *Rhizopus* species)

Dimorphic fungi
Histoplasma capsulatum

Blastomyces dermatitidis

Coccidioides immitis

Some fungi reproduce by spreading microscopic spores. The spores are often present in the air, where they can be inhaled or come into contact with the skin; they can cause a wide spectrum of diseases, from mild infections of the nail bed to severe infections such as meningitis or pneumonia. Invasive fungal infections are associated with high morbidity and mortality.

Dimorphic fungi exist as mold forms at lower temperatures and yeast forms at higher temperatures ("mold in the cold, yeast in the heat"). *Zygomycetes* refers to a class of fungi which includes *Mucor* and *Rhizopus* species; invasive disease caused by these species is commonly referred to as "mucormycosis."

Diagnosis of fungal infections can be made by culture, serologic studies or histologic features of a tissue specimen. *C. albicans* is the most susceptible of the *Candida* species to drug treatment. *C. glabrata* and *C. krusei* tend to be more difficult to treat due to resistance. Long-term, systemic antifungals are necessary for certain invasive fungal infections (e.g., *Cryptococcus, Coccidioides)* that occur in someone who is chronically immunosuppressed.

AMPHOTERICIN B

Amphotericin B binds to ergosterol, altering cell membrane permeability and causing cell death. It is a broad-spectrum drug that can be used as initial treatment for many invasive fungal infections, including cryptococcal meningitis (in combination with flucytosine), histoplasmosis and mucormycosis. It is active against:

- Yeasts: most *Candida* species and *Cryptococcus neoformans*
- Molds: *Aspergillus* species and *Zygomycetes*
- Dimorphic fungi: *Histoplasma capsulatum, Blastomyces dermatitidis* and *Coccidioides immitis*

Amphotericin B deoxycholate (the conventional formulation) has many toxicities. The amphotericin B lipid formulations are a complex of the active medication and a lipid component; they are associated with fewer toxicities (e.g., decreased infusion reactions, decreased nephrotoxicity) compared to the conventional (deoxycholate) formulation.

FORMULATIONS	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Conventional Formulation		**BOXED WARNINGS** Medication errors confusing the lipid-based forms of amphotericin *(AmBisome* and *Abelcet)* and conventional amphotericin B (deoxycholate) have resulted in cardiopulmonary arrest and death; conventional amphotericin B doses should not exceed 1.5 mg/kg/day; verify product name and dosage if dose exceeds 1.5 mg/kg/day **SIDE EFFECTS** Infusion-related: fever, chills, headache, malaise, rigors, ↓ or ↑ BP, thrombophlebitis, N/V Other: ↓ K, ↓ Mg, nephrotoxicity, anemia *AmBisome:* severe back/chest pain with the first dose **MONITORING** Renal function, LFTs, electrolytes (especially K and Mg), CBC **NOTES** Compatible with D5W only Lipid formulations must be filtered during preparation Amphotericin B deoxycholate (conventional formulation) requires premedication to reduce infusion-related reactions; give the following 30-60 minutes prior to the infusion: ■ Acetaminophen or NSAID ■ Diphenhydramine and/or hydrocortisone ■ NS boluses to ↓ the risk of nephrotoxicity ■ ± meperidine to ↓ the duration of severe rigors Both conventional and lipid formulations are yellow-orange in color
Amphotericin B Deoxycholate Injection	0.3-1.5 mg/kg/day	
Lipid Formulations		
Amphotericin B Lipid Complex *(Abelcet)* Injection	5 mg/kg/day	
Liposomal Amphotericin B *(AmBisome)* Injection	3-6 mg/kg/day	

AMPHOTERICIN B DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Additive risk of nephrotoxicity when used with other nephrotoxic drugs (e.g., aminoglycosides, cisplatin, polymyxins, cyclosporine, loop diuretics, NSAIDs, vancomycin, radiocontrast dye, tacrolimus).
- Can ↑ the risk of digoxin toxicity due to hypokalemia. Use caution with any agent that ↓ potassium or magnesium since amphotericin decreases both. Scheduled replacement of potassium and/or magnesium should be considered.

FLUCYTOSINE

Flucytosine penetrates fungal cells and is converted to fluorouracil, which competes with uracil and interferes with fungal RNA and protein synthesis. Due to the development of resistance, flucytosine should not be used alone. It is recommended in combination with amphotericin B for the treatment of invasive cryptococcal (e.g., meningitis) or *Candida* infections.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Flucytosine, 5-FC *(Ancobon)*	50-150 mg/kg/day PO divided Q6H CrCl ≤ 40 mL/min: adjustment required	**BOXED WARNING** Use with extreme caution in patients with renal dysfunction; monitor hematologic, renal and hepatic status **SIDE EFFECTS** Dose-related myelosuppression (anemia, neutropenia, thrombocytopenia), ↑ BUN/SCr, liver injury, ↑ bilirubin, CNS effects, ↓ BG, ↓ K, aplastic anemia

AZOLE ANTIFUNGALS

Azole antifungals decrease ergosterol synthesis and cell membrane formation. The activity and indications of azoles vary widely, and their use is sometimes limited due to significant drug interactions caused by CYP450 (mainly CYP3A4) inhibition.

Fluconazole is active against *C. albicans*, *C. parapsilosis* and *C. tropicalis*, but has limited activity against *C. glabrata*; *C. krusei* and molds are resistant. Fluconazole can be used for many infections, including yeast infections (e.g., oral, esophageal, vaginal). Oral yeast infections (i.e., oral thrush, also called oral candidiasis presents with white-colored patches on the tongue and oral mucosa (often asymptomatic, but can be painful). Fluconazole also covers *Cryptococcus* and *Coccidioides*.

Other azoles expand upon the spectrum of activity of fluconazole, with broader activity against resistant pathogens. Itraconazole covers the dimorphic fungi *(Blastomycoses* and *Histoplasma)*. Voriconazole is the treatment of choice for *Aspergillus*. See the Common Skin Conditions chapter for non-invasive fungal infections (e.g., onychomycosis, vaginal candidiasis).

KEY ISSUES WITH AZOLE ANTIFUNGALS

Class Effects

- ↑ LFTs
- QT prolongation (except isavuconazole)
- Many drug interactions

DRUG-SPECIFIC CONCERNS

- Fluconazole: only azole with renal dose adjustment
- Ketoconazole: hepatotoxicity has led to liver transplantation
- Itraconazole: can cause heart failure
- Voriconazole: can cause visual changes, phototoxicity and hallucinations
- Posaconazole:
  - Tablet dose ≠ suspension dose (due to different bioavailability)
  - Take with food

IV ADMINISTRATION

- IV to PO ratio is 1:1 for all azoles
- Drugs with sulfobutyl ether beta-cyclodextrin (SBECD) vehicle (can accumulate in renal dysfunction): voriconazole, posaconazole

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Fluconazole *(Diflucan)* Tablet, injection, suspension	50-800 mg PO/IV daily Vaginal candidiasis: 150 mg PO × 1 CrCl ≤ 50 mL/min: ↓ dose by 50%	**BOXED WARNINGS** **Itraconazole** Can worsen or cause heart failure; do not use to treat onychomycosis in patients with ventricular dysfunction or a history of heart failure ↑ plasma concentrations of certain drugs; can cause QT prolongation and ventricular tachyarrhythmias (e.g., Torsades de Pointes) **Ketoconazole** Hepatotoxicity which has led to liver transplantation and/or death QT prolongation Use PO tablets only when other antifungal therapy is unavailable or not tolerated and benefits outweigh risks (hepatotoxicity, drug interactions) **WARNINGS** Hepatotoxicity Fluconazole: exfoliative skin reactions, not recommended in pregnancy **SIDE EFFECTS** ↑ LFTs, QT prolongation, headache, N/V, abdominal pain, rash/pruritus, dizziness, hair loss (or possible hair growth) and altered hair texture with ketoconazole shampoo **NOTES** All azoles are cleared hepatically except fluconazole, which requires renal dose adjustment Fluconazole and voriconazole penetrate the CNS adequately to treat fungal meningitis (see voriconazole on the following page)
Itraconazole *(Sporanox, Tolsura)* Capsule, solution	200 mg PO daily or BID *Tolsura:* 130 mg PO daily or BID Formulations are not interchangeable (different bioavailability); oral solution is better absorbed Solution: take on an empty stomach Capsules: take with food	
Ketoconazole Tablet, cream, gel, foam, shampoo *Nizoral A-D* shampoo is OTC	200-400 mg PO daily No adjustment in renal impairment	

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Voriconazole ***(Vfend, Vfend IV)*** Tablet, suspension, injection	Loading dose: 6 mg/kg IV Q12H × 2 doses Maintenance dose: 4 mg/kg IV Q12H or 200 mg PO Q12H Mild-moderate hepatic impairment: reduce maintenance dose 50% Severe hepatic impairment: only use if benefit outweighs risk, monitor closely CrCl < 50 mL/min: the intravenous vehicle SBECD accumulates (use oral) Therapeutic range (trough): 1-5 mcg/mL	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** All (voriconazole, posaconazole, isavuconazole): coadministration with select drugs due to major drug interactions (see Azole Antifungal Drug Interactions on the next page) Isavuconazole: familial short QT syndrome (causes QT shortening, not prolongation) **WARNINGS** Hepatotoxicity, QT prolongation (except isavuconazole) - correct K, Ca and Mg prior to initiating treatment, avoid in pregnancy Voriconazole: visual disturbances (optic neuritis and papilledema), phototoxicity, serious skin reactions (SJS/TEN) Posaconazole: pseudoaldosteronism, prescribing and dispensing errors (suspension and tablet are not interchangeable as dosing regimens differ, tablet is better absorbed) Isavuconazole: drug particulates (IV), requires a filter (0.2 - 1.2 microns) during administration **SIDE EFFECTS** N/V/D, ↑ LFTs, rash, headache, injection site reactions, electrolye abnormalities, serious skin reactions (including SJS/TEN) Voriconazole: visual changes (~20% - blurred vision, photophobia, altered color perception, altered visual acuity), hallucinations, photosensitivity Isavuconazole: peripheral edema **MONITORING** LFTs, renal function, electrolytes, CBC Voriconazole: visual function (when used > 28 days), trough concentrations (toxicity more likely with troughs > 5 mcg/mL) **NOTES** Take PO voriconazole on an empty stomach, at least 1 hour before or after a meal; hold tube feedings for 1 hour before and after doses Voriconazole suspension: shake for 10 seconds before each use; do not refrigerate
Posaconazole ***(Noxafil)*** Delayed-release tablet, suspension, injection	Suspension: 200 mg TID or 400 mg BID Give with a full meal Tablets: 300 mg BID on day 1, then 300 mg daily with food IV: 300 mg BID on day 1, then 300 mg daily eGFR < 50 mL/min/1.73 m^2: IV vehicle SBECD can accumulate and worsen renal function (use oral)	
Isavuconazonium sulfate *(Cresemba)* Capsules, injection Prodrug of isavuconazole	IV/PO: 372 mg Q8H for 6 doses, then 372 mg daily No adjustment for renal dysfunction, use with caution in severe hepatic impairment Swallow capsules whole, do not crush or open	

AZOLE ANTIFUNGAL DRUG INTERACTIONS

- All azoles are moderate-strong CYP3A4 inhibitors; monitor for drug interactions.
- Itraconazole & ketoconazole inhibit P-glycoprotein.
- Fluconazole and voriconazole inhibit CYP2C9, which can ↑ the effects of warfarin. Monitor INR and signs/symptoms of bleeding.
- Azoles can ↑ the concentrations of apixaban and rivaroxaban. Monitor for bleeding.
- PPIs and cimetidine can decrease the absorption of posaconazole suspension and should be stopped during therapy to avoid treatment failure.
- The absorption of itraconazole capsules and ketoconazole requires an acidic gut; ↑ pH will ↓ absorption. Separate from antacids.
  - If PPIs or H2RAs must be used while on ketoconazole, take with an acidic beverage (such as non-diet cola) to provide an acidic environment for absorption.
- Caution with other QT-prolonging drugs, such as 5-HT3 receptor antagonists, antiarrhythmics, antidepressants, quinolones, macrolides and antipsychotics (see Arrhythmias chapter).
- Voriconazole:
  - Concentrations can ↑ dangerously when given with CYP2C19, 2C9 or 3A4 inhibitors, or with small dose increases. Exhibits first-order, followed by zero-order (non-linear), kinetics.
  - Contraindicated with barbiturates (long-acting), carbamazepine, efavirenz, ergot alkaloids, pimozide, quinidine, rifabutin, rifampin, ritonavir (≥ 800 mg/day), sirolimus or St. John's wort.
- Posaconazole is contraindicated with sirolimus, ergot alkaloids, pimozide, quinidine, atorvastatin, lovastatin and simvastatin.
- Isavuconazole is contraindiated with strong CYP3A4 inhibitors or inducers.

ECHINOCANDINS

Echinocandins inhibit the synthesis of beta (1,3)-D-glucan, an essential component of the fungal cell wall. They are effective against most *Candida* species, including strains typically resistant to azole antifungals (e.g., *C. glabrata, C. krusei)*. Though they have activity against *Aspergillus* species, they should only be used as part of a combination regimen, and other medications are generally preferred. Echinocandins are only available IV. They are typically well-tolerated and are not associated with significant renal or hepatic toxicity.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Caspofungin ***(Cancidas)*** Injection	70 mg IV on day 1, then 50 mg IV daily Moderate hepatic impairment: 70 mg IV on day 1, then 35 mg IV daily ↑ dose to 70 mg IV daily when used in combination with strong enzyme inducers	**WARNINGS** Histamine-mediated symptoms (rash, pruritus, facial swelling, flushing, hypotension); anaphylaxis **SIDE EFFECTS** ↑ LFTs, headache, ↑ or ↓ K, ↓ Mg, fever, N/V/D, anemia, ↑ SCr, rash Caspofungin: severe skin reactions, including SJS/TEN **MONITORING** LFTs **NOTES** All except rezafungin are given once daily Do not require dose adjustment in renal impairment Very few drug interactions Micafungin: protect from light during administration (see the Intravenous Medication Principles Chapter) Rezafungin: reserve for patients with limited or no alternative options (due to limited clinical & safety data)
Micafungin ***(Mycamine)*** Injection	**Candidemia** 100 mg IV daily **Esophageal Candidiasis** 150 mg IV daily	
Anidulafungin *(Eraxis)* Injection	**Candidemia** 200 mg IV on day 1, then 100 mg IV daily **Esophageal Candidiasis** 100 mg IV on day 1, then 50 mg daily	
Rezafungin *(Rezzayo)* Injection	**Candidemia and Invasive Candidiasis** 400 mg IV on day 1, then 200 mg IV weekly starting on day 8 for up to 4 doses	

OTHER ANTIFUNGAL AGENTS

Topical antifungal products are preferred in most cases for superficial fungal infections (see the Common Skin Conditions chapter); systemic medications are considered second line. Griseofulvin has a narrow spectrum, is less effective than other systemic drugs (e.g., itraconazole, terbinafine) and requires prolonged courses. Nystatin suspension, clotrimazole troches/lozenges and buccal miconazole are useful for treating mild, localized *Candida* infections (e.g., thrush).

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Nystatin Suspension, tablet Topical forms: cream, ointment, powder	**Oral Candidiasis** Suspension: 400,000-600,000 units 4 times/day × 7-14 days **Intestinal Infections** Oral tablets: 500,000-1,000,000 units Q8H	**SIDE EFFECTS** N/V/D, stomach pain (otherwise low systemic risk due to minimal GI absorption) **NOTES** Suspension: swish in the mouth and retain for as long as possible (several minutes) before swallowing
Griseofulvin Tablet (microsize, ultramicrosize), suspension (microsize) Indicated for fungal infections of skin, hair and nails	Microsize: 500-1,000 mg/day in 1-2 divided doses Ultramicrosize: 375-750 mg/day in 1-2 divided doses	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Pregnancy, severe liver disease, porphyria **SIDE EFFECTS** Photosensitivity, ↑ LFTs, HA, rash, urticaria, dizziness, leukopenia, severe skin reactions **NOTES** Cross reaction possible with penicillin allergy Take with a fatty meal to ↑ absorption or with food/milk to avoid GI upset
Terbinafine Tablet, topical Topical cream (OTC): ***Lamisil AT***	250 mg/day in 1-2 divided doses	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Chronic or active liver disease **WARNINGS** Hepatotoxicity, taste/smell disturbance (can be permanent loss), depression, neutropenia, thrombotic thrombocytopenic purpura (TTP), hemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS), serious skin reactions (SJS/TEN/DRESS/erythema multiforme), can cause/worsen systemic lupus erythematosus **SIDE EFFECTS** HA, ↑ LFTs, rash, abdominal pain, pruritus, diarrhea, dyspepsia
Clotrimazole 10 mg troche/lozenge Topical and vaginal forms (multiple brand names)	**Oropharyngeal Candidiasis** Prophylaxis: 10 mg TID Treatment: 10 mg 5 times/day × 7-14 days	**SIDE EFFECTS** ↑ LFTs, nausea, dysgeusia **NOTES** Allow troche to dissolve slowly over 15-30 minutes

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Miconazole Buccal tablet *(Oravig)* Topical and vaginal forms (multiple brand names)	**Oropharyngeal Candidiasis** 50 mg (1 tablet) applied to the upper gum region daily for 7-14 days	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Hypersensitivity to milk protein concentrate **SIDE EFFECTS** Application site reactions (pain, burning, pruritus, edema, toothache)
Oteseconazole *(Vivjoa)* Capsule Only indicated for recurrent vulvovaginal candidiasis	600 mg on day 1, then 450 mg on day 2 Starting on day 14: 150 mg once weekly × 11 weeks	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Pregnancy (or reproductive potential), breastfeeding, moderate-severe liver impairment or eGFR < 30 mL/min/1.73 m^2 **SIDE EFFECTS** Nausea, HA, menstrual bleeding, vulvovaginal irritation, pain

DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Griseofulvin: ↑ the metabolism of hormonal contraceptives (estrogen and progestin) which can lead to contraceptive failure. Use a nonhormonal form of contraception.
- Terbinafine is a strong CYP2D6 inhibitor and a weak/moderate CYP3A4 inducer.

EMPIRIC TREATMENT FOR SELECT FUNGAL PATHOGENS/INFECTIONS*

PATHOGEN	PREFERRED REGIMEN	ALTERNATIVE REGIMEN
Candida albicans Oropharyngeal infection (thrush)	Mild disease: topical antifungals (clotrimazole, miconazole) Moderate-severe disease or HIV+: fluconazole	Nystatin
Candida albicans Esophageal infection	Fluconazole	Echinocandin
Candida krusei and *glabrata*** All *Candida* species bloodstream infections	Echinocandin	Amphotericin B, high-dose fluconazole (susceptible isolates only)
Aspergillus Invasive	Voriconazole	Isavuconazole, amphotericin B
Cryptococcus neoformans Meningitis	Amphotericin B + flucytosine (5-FC)	High-dose fluconazole + flucytosine
Dermatophytes Nail bed infection	Terbinafine or itraconazole (confirm fungal infection prior to treatment); see the Common Skin Conditions chapter	Fluconazole

De-escalate and tailor therapy based on a culture and susceptibility report.
**See the Infectious Disease IV chapter for opportunistic fungal infections that affect immunocompromised patients.*
***Candida krusei and glabrata are more resistant to azole antifungals.*

ANTIFUNGAL KEY COUNSELING POINTS

See the Drug Formulations and Patient Counseling chapter for counseling language/layman's terminology.

AZOLE ANTIFUNGALS

- Can cause:
  - Liver damage.
  - QT prolongation (except isavuconazonium).
- Many drug interactions.

KETOCONAZOLE AND ITRACONAZOLE

- Itraconazole
  - Tablets and capsules: take with food.
  - Solution: take on an empty stomach.
  - Can cause heart failure.
- Possible drug interactions due to high gastric pH.

POSACONAZOLE

- Tablets: take with food.
- Suspension: take with a full meal or oral liquid nutritional supplement.

VORICONAZOLE

- Take on an empty stomach, at least one hour before or one hour after meals.
- Can cause:
  - Photosensitivity: avoid direct sunlight.
  - Vision changes: use caution when driving at night.
- Store reconstituted oral suspension at room temperature.

NYSTATIN

- Oral suspension: shake well before using.

TERBINAFINE

- Oral terbinafine can cause liver damage.
- Can take months after finishing treatment to see full benefit of this drug (it takes time for new healthy nails to grow and replace the infected ones).

VIRAL INFECTIONS

Viruses depend on host cell metabolic processes for survival; for that reason, they are sometimes referred to as obligate intracellular parasites. Many viral infections have no effective drug treatment. Medications are available to treat influenza virus, COVID-19, herpes simplex virus [genital herpes, herpes labialis (cold sores) and systemic herpes virus infections], varicella zoster virus (VZV) and cytomegalovirus (CMV).

Treatments for viral infections work by directly inhibiting viruses (antiviral agents) or augmenting or modifying host defenses to the viral infection (immunomodulating agents). Antivirals target critical steps in the viral life cycle, such as entry into the cell or replication.

INFLUENZA

Influenza is a respiratory virus that affects 3 – 11% of the U.S. population annually, with peak activity typically occurring between late November and March. Influenza A and B are the strains that commonly infect humans. Many diagnostic tests are available to test for influenza (e.g., molecular assays, antigen detection tests). The rapid influenza diagnostic test is often done as a nasopharyngeal swab.

Both influenza A and B can cause severe illness leading to hospitalization and death, particularly in at-risk populations, including pregnant patients, immunocompromised patients, children < 5 years, adults ≥ 65 years, and those with comorbid conditions (e.g., diabetes, asthma, cardiovascular disease).

Influenza commonly presents with fever, chills, fatigue, myalgia, non-productive cough, sore throat and headache. It spreads via respiratory droplets (e.g., generated by coughing). A person with influenza can be contagious one day prior to developing symptoms and for up to 5 – 7 days after becoming ill.

The seasonal influenza vaccine is the most effective prevention for influenza infection and is recommended for all patients age ≥ 6 months who have no contraindications (see the Immunizations chapter).

ANTIVIRALS FOR INFLUENZA

Neuraminidase inhibitors (oseltamivir, zanamivir and peramivir) reduce the amount of virus in the body by inhibiting the enzyme which enables release of new viral particles from infected cells. They are active against influenza A and B, decreasing the duration of symptoms by about one day and reducing complications. To be most effective, neuraminidase inhibitors should be started within 48 hours of illness onset. In hospitalized, severely ill patients and those at high risk of complications, they should still be started > 48 hours after symptom onset.

Baloxavir marboxil is an endonuclease inhibitor for the treatment and post-exposure prevention of influenza. It has the advantage of being a single-dose regimen. Similar to neuraminidase inhibitors, it should be started within 48 hours of symptom onset.

The adamantanes (rimantadine and amantadine) were previously used to treat and prevent influenza A, but they are no longer recommended due to widespread resistance. Amantadine is used for Parkinson disease (see the Parkinson Disease chapter).

Neuraminidase Inhibitors

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Oseltamivir *(Tamiflu)* Capsules, suspension Stuart Monk/Shutterstock.com	**Treatment, age > 12 yrs:** 75 mg BID × 5 days **Prophylaxis, age > 12 yrs:** 75 mg daily × 10 days CrCl ≤ 60 mL/min: adjustment required **Pediatric patients:** dose based on body weight	**WARNINGS** Neuropsychiatric events (sudden confusion, delirium, hallucinations, unusual behavior, self-injury), serious skin reactions (SJS/TEN), anaphylaxis **SIDE EFFECTS** Headache, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain **NOTES** Preferred neuraminidase inhibitor in pregnancy Store reconstituted suspension at room temperature for 10 days or in the refrigerator for 17 days
Zanamivir *(Relenza Diskhaler)* Aersol powder	**Treatment, age ≥ 7 yrs:** 10 mg (two 5 mg inhalations) BID × 5 days **Prophylaxis, age ≥ 5 yrs:** 10 mg (two 5 mg inh) once daily × 10 days (household setting) or 28 days (community outbreak)	**WARNINGS** Neuropsychiatric events, bronchospasm (do not use in asthma/COPD or with any breathing problems); stop the drug if wheezing or breathing problems develop **SIDE EFFECTS** Headache, throat pain, cough
Peramivir *(Rapivab)* Injection	**Treatment (adult):** 600 mg IV as a single dose CrCl < 50 mL/min: adjustment required	**WARNINGS** Neuropsychiatric events, serious skin reactions (SJS/TEN), anaphylaxis, renal impairment **SIDE EFFECTS** Hypertension, insomnia, ↑ blood glucose, diarrhea, constipation, neutropenia, ↑ AST/ALT

Endonuclease Inhibitors

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Baloxavir marboxil ***(Xofluza)*** Capsules, suspension	**Treatment & prophylaxis, age ≥ 5 yrs:** ≥ 80 kg: 80 mg × 1 dose 20-80 kg: 40 mg × 1 dose < 20 kg: 2 mg/kg × 1 dose Use with caution in renal or hepatic impairment (limited data)	**WARNINGS** Hypersensitivity, including skin reactions (erythema multiforme, urticaria) Monitor for secondary bacterial infections and treat accordingly **SIDE EFFECTS** Diarrhea **NOTES** Avoid administration with dairy products, antacids or other supplements containing polyvalent cations (e.g., calcium, magnesium, selenium, zinc) Store in original blister packaging Once reconstituted, administer the oral suspension within 10 hours; store at room temperature; dose may require more than 1 bottle

COVID-19

Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), a novel coronavirus that emerged in late 2019, causes coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). Clinical presentations range from asymptomatic to severe illness requiring ICU admission and mechanical ventilation. Advanced age and comorbidities (e.g., cardiovascular or respiratory disease, diabetes, cancer) increase the risk of severe illness and death.

Like influenza, COVID-19 is spread by respiratory droplets released when coughing or sneezing. Spread can be reduced by isolating from others, wearing a mask and frequent handwashing. Infected individuals may be contagious for up to 48 hours before symptom onset. Symptoms often present within 4 – 5 days of exposure (up to 14 days) and can include fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath, fatigue, myalgia, loss of taste or smell, sore throat, runny nose and GI symptoms. Vaccines for COVID-19 are discussed in the Immunizations chapter.

COVID-19 TESTING AND TREATMENT

Generally, all symptomatic and select asymptomatic individuals (e.g., travelers, those with close contact with an infected person) should be tested for COVID-19. Diagnosis usually involves a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test using a nasopharyngeal swab specimen and/or a rapid antigen test, which is generally less sensitive than PCR. If testing is positive, precautions should be taken to prevent the spread to others (e.g., stay home and away from others). Patients can return to normal activities after being afebrile for > 24 hours and symptoms have improved overall. Consult the CDC and Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA) websites for the most current recommendations.

Symptomatic care (e.g., hydration, analgesics/antipyretics, antitussives) is appropriate. Patients should be counseled to seek medical care if symptoms worsen (e.g., new-onset dyspnea) or interfere with daily activities. The preferred outpatient treatment for patients at risk of progressing to severe COVID-19 (e.g., age > 50 years, not up-to-date with vaccinations, immunocompromised) is oral nirmatrelvir/ritonavir *(Paxlovid)*, which has a boxed warning for significant drug interactions due to the ritonavir component. Alternative therapies include IV remdesivir *(Veklury)* and oral molnupiravir *(Lagevrio)*.

Treatment of hospitalized patients can vary depending on disease severity (i.e., requirement for supplemental oxygen or mechanical ventilation), but can include systemic steroids (e.g., dexamethasone), antivirals (specifically remdesivir) and/or immunomodulator treatment (e.g., baricitinib, tocilizumab).

HERPES VIRUSES

Hundreds of herpes viruses exist, but not all are responsible for causing human disease. Clinically significant herpes viruses include herpes simplex viruses 1 and 2 (HSV-1, HSV-2), varicella zoster virus (VZV), cytomegalovirus (CMV), Epstein-Barr virus (EBV), human herpesviruses (HHV-6, HHV-7) and Kaposi sarcoma-associated herpes virus (HHV-8).

Both HSV-1 and HSV-2 can cause various infections, including orofacial, esophageal, genital, ophthalmic, pulmonary and CNS (e.g., encephalitis) infections. HSV-1 is most commonly associated with oropharyngeal disease. HSV-2 is more closely associated with genital disease. Each virus is capable of causing infections clinically indistinguishable at both anatomic sites.

ANTIVIRALS FOR HERPES SIMPLEX VIRUS AND VARICELLA ZOSTER VIRUS

DRUG	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Acyclovir *(Zovirax, Sitavig)* Capsule, tablet, buccal tablet, suspension, injection, topical	**WARNINGS** Caution in patients with renal impairment, the elderly and/or those receiving nephrotoxic drugs; infuse acyclovir over at least 1 hour and maintain adequate hydration to reduce the risk of renal tubular damage TTP and HUS have been reported in immunocompromised patients **SIDE EFFECTS** Malaise, headache, N/V/D, rash, pruritus, ↑ LFTs, neutropenia, transient burning or stinging with topical acyclovir; ↑ BUN/SCr with crystal nephropathy (IV acyclovir); anaphylaxis (famciclovir) **MONITORING** Renal function, LFTs, CBC **NOTES** Acyclovir IV: do not use TBW to calculate the mg/kg dose in obese patients (↑ toxicity); IBW or adjusted body weight (if BMI ≥ 40 kg/m^2) should be used (may vary by institution, see the Calculations IV chapter for details) ↓ dose and/or extend interval in renal impairment In general, 5 mg/kg IV acyclovir = 1,000 mg PO valacyclovir
Valacyclovir *(Valtrex)* Tablet Prodrug of acyclovir	
Famciclovir Tablet Prodrug of penciclovir	

HERPES SIMPLEX LABIALIS (COLD SORES)

Cold sores are common and highly contagious. Children often contract the infection from family members; infection is usually due to HSV-1 in children but can be caused by HSV-2. The virus can shed when the patient is asymptomatic, but is more commonly spread when there are active lesions. Patients should avoid kissing and sharing drinks when the lesions are oozing.

Cold sores usually appear in the same location repeatedly. The most common site is the junction between the upper and lower lip. Triggers that cause sore outbreaks include stress/fatigue, stress to the skin (e.g., sun exposure, acid peels) and dental work. Patients should identify their triggers and attempt to avoid them.

Cold sore eruption is preceded by a prodrome (symptoms that occur before lesions appear) of tingling, itching or soreness, which is the optimal time to take medication to reduce blister duration. If recurrences are frequent (> 4 times/year), chronic suppression treatment may be warranted. OTC and prescription topicals shorten the duration of cold sores by up to one day; oral (systemic) antivirals shorten the duration by up to two days.

Topical Treatment for Herpes Labialis

DRUGS	DOSING	NOTES
Docosanol *(Abreva)* – OTC Cream	Apply 5× daily at first sign of outbreak, continue until healed.	Systemic antivirals are more effective.
Acyclovir *(Zovirax)* – Rx Cream	Apply 5× daily for 4 days (can be used on genital sores).	Marten_House/Shutterstock.com
Acyclovir *(Sitavig)* – Rx Buccal tablet	Apply 50 mg tablet as a single dose to the upper gum region.	
Penciclovir *(Denavir)* – Rx Cream	Apply every 2 hours during waking hours for 4 days.	

Systemic (Oral) Treatment of Herpes Labialis

EPISODE	ACYCLOVIR	VALACYCLOVIR	FAMCICLOVIR
Initial (treat for 7-10 days)	200 mg 5× daily or 400 mg TID	1 gram BID	250 mg 3× daily or 500 mg BID
Recurrence	400 mg TID × 5-10 days	2 grams BID × 1 day	1.5 grams × 1 dose
Chronic suppression	400 mg BID	500 mg or 1 gram daily	

GENITAL HERPES

Genital herpes, caused by HSV-2, is a chronic, life-long viral infection. The first episode usually begins within 2 – 14 days after exposure. Up to 50% of patients are asymptomatic, but others experience a prodrome of flu-like symptoms (fever, headache, malaise, myalgia) before development of pustular or ulcerative lesions on external genitalia. Lesions begin as papules or vesicles that rapidly spread. Clusters of lesions form, crust and then re-epithelialize. Lesions are painful and associated with itching, dysuria and vaginal or urethral discharge.

For optimal efficacy, treatment should be initiated during the prodrome period or within one day of lesion onset. Acyclovir is generally dosed more frequently. Valacyclovir is a prodrug of acyclovir; it can reach higher concentrations than oral acyclovir and the less frequent dosing can enhance adherence. If the virus is found to be resistant to acyclovir, it will be resistant to valacyclovir and (usually) famciclovir. Infections caused by acyclovir-resistant HSV are treated with foscarnet until the lesions heal.

Recurrent infections are not associated with systemic manifestations. Symptoms are localized to the genital area, are milder and of shorter duration. Suppressive therapy (antivirals taken chronically) reduces the frequency of genital herpes recurrences and is recommended for patients who have frequent recurrences (e.g., > 6/year). With suppressive therapy, many report no symptomatic outbreaks and viral transmission is reduced.

Oral Treatment of Genital Herpes in Non-HIV Patients

EPISODE	ACYCLOVIR	VALACYCLOVIR	FAMCICLOVIR
Initial (treat for 7-10 days)	400 mg TID or 200 mg 5× daily	1 gram BID	250 mg TID
Recurrence	400 mg TID × 5 days or 800 mg BID × 5 days or 800 mg TID × 2 days	500 mg BID × 3 days or 1 gram daily × 5 days	125 mg BID × 5 days or 500 mg × 1, then 250 mg BID × 2 days or 1 gram BID × 1 day
Chronic suppression	400 mg BID	500 mg or 1 gram daily	250 mg BID

INVASIVE HSV INFECTIONS

HSV is the most commonly identified cause of viral encephalitis in the U.S. HSV encephalitis occurs more frequently in young patients (age 5 – 30 years) and older adults (age > 50 years). Hallmark symptoms include acute onset fever, focal neurologic symptoms and altered mental status. HSV encephalitis is treated with IV acyclovir 10 mg/kg/dose Q8H × 14 – 21 days. Other invasive infections (e.g., esophagitis, pneumonitis) occur infrequently, typically in immunosuppressed patients, and are treated with IV acyclovir 5 mg/kg/dose Q8H.

VARICELLA ZOSTER VIRUS AND HERPES ZOSTER

Most adults in the U.S. had varicella zoster virus (chickenpox) infection during childhood. The virus can lie dormant in the nerves for decades without causing any symptoms. The recurrence of viral symptoms is called herpes zoster or shingles. An outbreak can occur as the patient ages and is often due to acute stress. Although herpes zoster can occur at any age, adults age > 60 years are most often affected. The shingles rash is distinctive; it can be itchy or tingly, is very painful and often manifests unilaterally. Pharmacists should recognize the classic presentation of a shingles rash and inform patients to see a healthcare provider.

Antiviral therapy should be initiated at the earliest sign or symptom of shingles and is most effective when started within 72 hours of the onset of zoster rash. Pain can be treated with topical medications (lidocaine patch, gel), neuropathic pain medications (e.g., pregabalin, gabapentin, duloxetine, tricyclic antidepressants), NSAIDs or opioids. Most patients recover without long-term effects, but some will have chronic pain [called postherpetic neuralgia (PHN)], which can be debilitating. Older patients are more likely to experience PHN, non-pain complications, hospitalizations and interference with activities of daily living. The treatment of PHN is similar to the treatment of acute shingles pain.

The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommends the shingles vaccine in immunocompetent adults ≥ 50 years and adults ≥ 19 years who are or will be immunosuppressed. Patients who have had a previous shingles outbreak should be vaccinated to decrease the likelihood of recurrence and severity of PHN. See the Immunizations chapter.

Herpes Zoster (Shingles) Treatment

DRUG	DOSING	DESCRIPTION
Acyclovir *(Zovirax)*	800 mg PO 5× daily for 7 days (or 10 days)	Toey Toey/Shutterstock.com A cluster of fluid-filled blisters, often in a band around one side of the waist, on one side of the forehead, around an eye or on the neck (less common on other areas of the body)
Valacyclovir *(Valtrex)*	1 gram PO TID for 7 days	
Famciclovir	500 mg PO TID for 7 days	

CYTOMEGALOVIRUS

Cytomegalovirus (CMV) is a double-stranded DNA virus within the herpes family (HHV-5). CMV infection occurs in severely immunocompromised states (e.g., AIDS, transplant recipients) and most commonly causes retinitis, colitis or esophagitis. Ganciclovir and valganciclovir are the treatments of choice for CMV infection. Foscarnet and cidofovir should be reserved for refractory cases, as an alternative when treatment-limiting toxicities occur with ganciclovir and/or when the CMV strain is resistant to (val)ganciclovir. Maribavir is an option for post-transplant CMV disease refractory to all other treatments.

Secondary prophylaxis (also called maintenance therapy) is necessary for some patients. Letermovir is indicated for CMV prophylaxis in patients receiving a kidney transplant (if donor is CMV-positive/recipient CMV-negative) or bone marrow transplant (if recipient CMV-positive). Ganciclovir and valganciclovir are used for prophylaxis of CMV infection in solid organ transplant recipients at high risk (donor is CMV-positive/recipient is CMV-negative).

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Ganciclovir Injection *Zirgan* (ophthalmic gel)	Treatment: 5 mg/kg IV BID × 14-21 days Maintenance/prophylaxis: 5 mg/kg IV daily ↓ dose and extend interval when CrCl < 70 mL/min Injection: reconstitute with sterile water, not bacteriostatic water	**BOXED WARNINGS** Myelosuppression, carcinogenic, fetal toxicity, ↓ fertility **SIDE EFFECTS** Fever, N/V/D, anorexia, ↑ SCr, seizures (rare), retinal detachment (in patients with CMV retinitis) **MONITORING** CBC with differential, SCr, retinal exam **NOTES** Females should use contraception during treatment and for 30 days after, males should use a barrier contraceptive for 90 days after Hazardous agent: special handling required Valgancicloir reconstituted oral solution: refrigerate; discard after 49 days
Valganciclovir *(Valcyte)* Tablet, oral solution Prodrug of ganciclovir (with better bioavailability)	Treatment: 900 mg PO BID × 21 days Maintenance/prophylaxis: 900 mg PO daily ↓ dose and extend interval when CrCl < 60 mL/min	
Cidofovir Injection CMV retinitis in HIV patients only	5 mg/kg/week IV × 2 weeks, then 5 mg/kg once every 2 weeks Renal impairment: ↓ dose or discontinue based on level of SCr increase (see Contraindications)	**BOXED WARNINGS** Nephrotoxicity, neutropenia, carcinogenic and teratogenic **CONTRAINDICATIONS** SCr > 1.5 mg/dL, CrCl ≤ 55 mL/min, urine protein ≥ 100 mg/dL (≥ 2+ proteinuria), sulfa allergy, use with or within 7 days of other nephrotoxic drugs, IO injection **SIDE EFFECTS** Myelosuppression, metabolic acidosis **NOTES** Patient should receive hydration before each dose and probenecid before and after each dose to ↓ nephrotoxicity Hazardous agent: special handling required
Foscarnet *(Foscavir)* Injection CMV retinitis, resistant HSV	Induction: 90 mg/kg IV Q12H or 60 mg/kg Q8H × 2-3 weeks Maintenance: 90-120 mg/kg IV daily Renal impairment: ↓ dose and extend interval	**BOXED WARNINGS** Renal impairment (prehydration recommended); seizures due to electrolyte imbalances (can lead to status epilepticus or death) **SIDE EFFECTS** Electrolyte abnormalities (↓ K, ↓ Ca, ↓ Mg, ↓ Phos), ↑ BUN/SCr, QT prolongation **NOTES** Do not exceed maximum infusion rate (increases toxicity)

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Letermovir *(Prevymis)* Tablet, injection CMV prophylaxis (select kidney and bone marrow transplant recipients)	480 mg PO/IV once daily Continue through day 100 post bone marrow transplantation Continue through day 200 post kidney transplantation Not recommended if severe hepatic impairment (Child-Pugh C)	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Concomitant administration with pimozide or ergot alkaloids, or pitavastatin and simvastatin (if also taking cyclosporine) **SIDE EFFECTS** Atrial fibrillation, tachycardia, peripheral edema, thrombocytopenia, N/V/D, fatigue, headache, cough **NOTES** IV vehicle (hydroxypropyl betadex) can accumulate if CrCl < 50 mL/min

EPSTEIN-BARR VIRUS

Epstein-Barr virus (EBV) is a member of the herpes virus family. Infectious EBV is called mononucleosis or "mono." Most people get infected with EBV at some point in their lives; it is transmitted through bodily fluids, primarily saliva, and can spread by kissing, sharing drinks or food, or by contact with an object that has been in the mouth of an infected person (e.g., child's toys). Symptoms include fatigue, fever, sore throat and swollen lymph nodes. Symptoms usually resolve in 2 – 4 weeks. No drug treatment or vaccine exists for mononucleosis.

Amoxicillin or ampicillin treatment in a child with EBV can cause a non-pruritic (i.e., non-itchy) rash that appears similar to an allergic reaction; it is not and should not be included as an "allergy" in the medical record.

ANTIVIRAL KEY COUNSELING POINTS

See the Drug Formulations and Patient Counseling chapter for counseling language/layman's terminology.

OSELTAMIVIR

- Treatment should begin within two days of onset of influenza symptoms.
- Can cause delirium.

ACYCLOVIR AND VALACYCLOVIR

- This medication does not cure herpes infections (cold sores, chickenpox, shingles or genital herpes). Use safe sex practices to lower transmission risk.
- Start treatment within 24 hours of the onset of symptoms.
- Acyclovir:
  - Drink plenty of fluids.
  - The topical cream can cause temporary burning or stinging.

Select Guidelines/References

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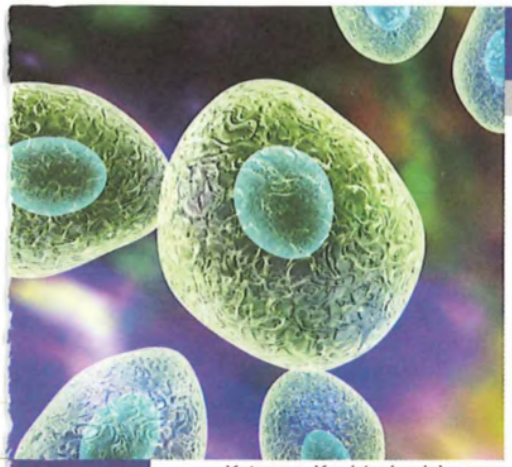

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CHAPTER 25

INFECTIOUS DISEASES IV: OPPORTUNISTIC INFECTIONS

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BACKGROUND

Immunocompromised patients are predisposed to opportunistic infections (OIs), which occur when the immune system is weak and unable to respond normally to invading bacteria, fungi, viruses and protozoa. The risk can be related to a disease or drug treatment that suppresses the immune system. Immunocompromised states include:

- Diseases that destroy key components of the immune response, primarily HIV with a CD4 T lymphocyte count < 200 cells/mm^3 (which is a defining criteria for AIDS).
- Use of systemic steroids for 14 days or longer at a prednisone equivalent dose of ≥ 20 mg/day or ≥ 2 mg/kg/day.
- Asplenia (lack of a functioning spleen), due to sickle cell disease or splenectomy.
- Use of immunosuppressants for an autoimmune condition or post-transplant.
- Use of cancer chemotherapy drugs that destroy white blood cells, particularly if severe neutropenia (ANC < 500 cells/mm^3) is present.

PRIMARY PROPHYLAXIS

Many OIs can be prevented with antimicrobials (e.g., antibiotics, antivirals); this is referred to as chemoprophylaxis, or simply prophylaxis. This is a key component of managing patients with HIV. The criteria for starting and stopping primary prophylaxis for the most common OIs is discussed in detail on the next page. Note that while *Candida* infections in the mouth/esophagus (e.g., thrush) are more likely in immunocompromised states, prophylaxis is not usually recommended.

Another important patient population at risk of infections (including OIs) are transplant recipients (including those receiving solid organ and bone marrow transplants). These patients have a greater risk of contracting infections in general; therefore, it is essential that they receive recommended vaccines before initiating immunosuppressive therapy (see the Immunizations and Transplant chapters). In addition, they have a high risk of:

- Viral infections, especially cytomegalovirus (CMV). CMV prophylaxis with letermovir (for kidney and bone marrow transplant recipients) or valganciclovir (for any solid organ transplant recipient) is common.
- *Pneumocystis jirovecii* pneumonia (PJP or PCP), which is prevented with similar prophylaxis options as those used for patients with HIV (see table).

PRIMARY PROPHYLAXIS REGIMENS IN HIV

The table below outlines select OIs, the CD4 count at which a patient with HIV becomes at risk for the infection, the primary prophylaxis regimens that can be used to prevent the infection and the criteria for discontinuing prophylactic therapy.

As with most infections, selection of an alternate (i.e., second-line) regimen is based on patient-specific factors (e.g., allergies, G6PD deficiency). For example, atovaquone, dapsone and pentamidine are options for PCP in the setting of a sulfa allergy, and atovaquone and pentamidine are options in the setting of G6PD deficiency. Leucovorin is added to all pyrimethamine-containing regimens as rescue therapy to reduce the risk of pyrimethamine-induced myelosuppression.

OPPORTUNISTIC INFECTION	CRITERIA FOR STARTING	PRIMARY PROPHYLAXIS REGIMEN	CRITERIA FOR DISCONTINUING
Pneumocystis jirovecii pneumonia (PJP or PCP)	CD4 count < 100 cells/mm^3 or CD4 count < 100-200 cells/mm^3 if HIV RNA level detectable	**PREFERRED** SMX/TMP DS or SS daily **ALTERNATIVES** SMX/TMP DS 3x/week or Dapsone or Dapsone + pyrimethamine + leucovorin or Atovaquone or Atovaquone + pyrimethamine + leucovorin Inhaled pentamidine	CD4 count ≥ 200 cells/mm^3 for ≥ 3 months and remains on ART
Toxoplasma gondii encephalitis	Toxoplasma IgG positive and CD4 count < 100 cells/mm^3	**PREFERRED** SMX/TMP DS daily **ALTERNATIVES** SMX/TMP DS 3x/week or SS daily or Dapsone + pyrimethamine + leucovorin or Atovaquone or Atovaquone + pyrimethamine + leucovorin	CD4 count > 200 cells/mm^3 for > 3 months and remains on ART
Mycobacterium avium complex (MAC)	Not recommended if ART is started immediately Initiate if not taking ART, CD4 count < 50 cells/mm^3 and no active MAC infection	**PREFERRED** Azithromycin 1,200 mg weekly **ALTERNATIVES** Azithromycin 600 mg twice weekly or Clarithromycin 500 mg BID	Taking fully suppressive ART

ART = antiretroviral therapy

TREATMENT OF OPPORTUNISTIC INFECTIONS

The following table lists select OIs and the recommended medications for treatment, which is the same regardless of the cause of immunosuppression. After completing initial treatment, secondary prophylaxis is given to prevent recurrence of the infection in patients who continue to be at risk.

When treating thrush in patients with HIV, even with mild disease, systemic treatment is preferred (rather than localized treatment with agents such as clotrimazole, miconazole or nystatin).

OPPORTUNISTIC INFECTION	PREFERRED REGIMEN	ALTERNATIVE REGIMEN	SECONDARY PROPHYLAXIS
Candidiasis (oropharyngeal/ esophageal) Known as "thrush" Appears as a white film in the mouth/throat	Fluconazole	Oropharyngeal: itraconazole, posaconazole, topicals (e.g., clotrimazole troche, nystatin) Esophageal: voriconazole, isavuconazonium or an echinocandin (e.g., caspofungin)	Not usually recommended
Cryptococcal meningitis	Amphotericin B (liposomal preferred) + flucytosine	Fluconazole + flucytosine or Amphotericin B + fluconazole	Fluconazole (low dose)
Cytomegalovirus (CMV)	Valganciclovir or Ganciclovir	If toxicities to ganciclovir or resistant strains: foscarnet or cidofovir	None; for HIV, continue ART and maintain CD4 count > 100 cells/mm^3
Mycobacterium avium complex (MAC)	(Clarithromycin or azithromycin) + ethambutol	Add a 3rd or 4th drug: rifabutin, amikacin, streptomycin, moxifloxacin or levofloxacin	Same as treatment regimen
Pneumocystis jirovecii pneumonia (PJP or PCP)	SMX/TMP (high-dose, see Infectious Diseases I chapter) ± prednisone or methylprednisolone Duration: 21 days	Pentamidine IV or Clindamycin + primaquine	Same as primary prophylaxis
Toxoplasma gondii encephalitis Risks: ingestion of undercooked/raw meat or shellfish, or contact with cat feces/litter	Pyrimethamine + leucovorin + sulfadiazine SMX/TMP	Clindamycin + pyrimethamine + leucovorin or	Same as treatment (but reduced doses)

Select Guidelines/References

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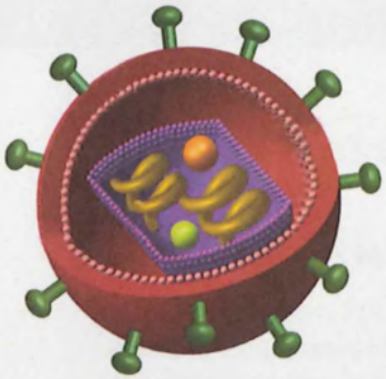

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CHAPTER 26

HUMAN IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS

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= Study Tip Gal

BACKGROUND

There are ~1.2 million people infected with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) in the U.S., and ~13% of those are unaware that they are infected. Annually, ~35,000 people are newly diagnosed with HIV. If left untreated, HIV progresses to an advanced and severe stage of infection called acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS).

HIV CAUSES T-CELL DEATH

HIV is a single-stranded RNA retrovirus that uses the machinery in host CD4 T-helper cells (T cells) to replicate. Once replicated, the viral copies burst through the CD4 cell membrane, destroying the cell. Billions of T cells are destroyed every day if HIV is not treated adequately with antiretroviral therapy (ART).

- When HIV continues to replicate, the viral load increases and the CD4 count decreases.
- When the CD4 count falls below 200 cells/mm^3, the immune system cannot ward off opportunistic infections (OIs) (i.e., infections caused by normal environmental exposures that would not occur with an intact immune system) and certain malignancies (e.g., Kaposi's sarcoma) related to AIDS.

TRANSMISSION

HIV infection is spread by direct contact between infected body fluids (blood, semen, breast milk or vaginal or rectal secretions) and mucus membranes or open wounds. Most infections are caused by unprotected (e.g., condomless) vaginal or anal sex, or sharing injection drug equipment, including needles. Infection can spread from a female patient with HIV to her child during pregnancy, childbirth or breastfeeding. This is called mother-to-child or vertical transmission.

SCREENING AND DIAGNOSIS

SCREENING RECOMMENDATIONS

The CDC recommends routine HIV screening at least once for all patients age 13 – 64 years and once during each pregnancy as part of routine prenatal screening. Annual testing is recommended for patients with a history of other sexually transmitted infections (e.g., syphilis, gonorrhea), hepatitis or tuberculosis and for those that engage in the following high-risk activities:

- Sex with multiple partners and/or with someone whose sexual history is unknown
- Men who have sex with men
- Anal or vaginal sex with someone infected with HIV
- Sharing injection equipment (e.g., needles)

ACUTE HIV INFECTION

Acute HIV infection presents with non-specific flu-like symptoms that can last a few days to several weeks, including fever, myalgia, headache, lymphadenopathy (swollen lymph glands), pharyngitis and rash. An antibody response takes time to develop (weeks to months) and in most cases, is not fully able to fend off the virus. Patients become asymptomatic after this initial phase, but the virus continues to replicate and is capable of being transmitted.

PROGRESSION TO AIDS

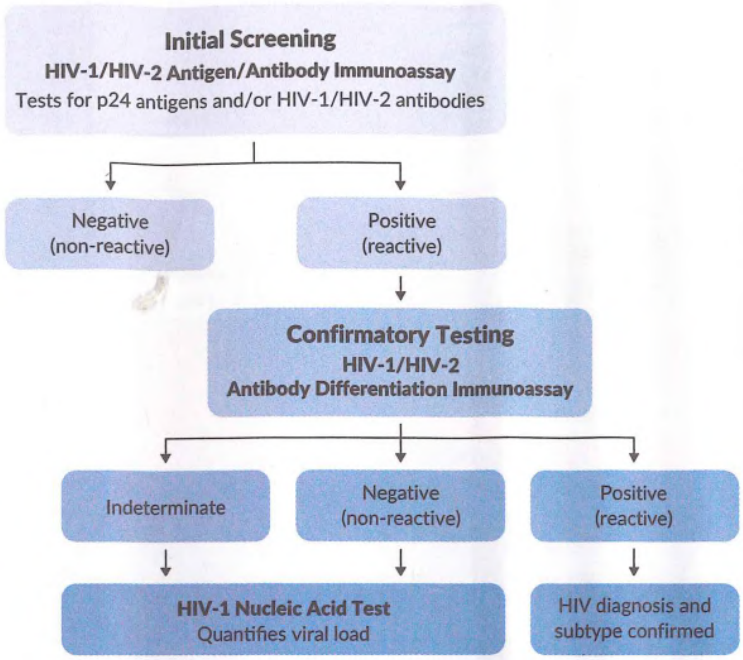
AIDS is diagnosed if the CD4 count is < 200 cells/mm^3 or an AIDS-defining condition is present, including:

- Opportunistic infections (OIs) [e.g., *Mycobacterium avium* complex (MAC), *Pneumocystis jirovecii* pneumonia (PJP, PCP), *Cryptococcus neoformans,* histoplasmosis, severe *Candida albicans* infections (e.g., esophageal and bronchial thrush)]. The prophylaxis and treatment of OIs is discussed in the Infectious Diseases IV chapter.
- Several cancers, including Kaposi's sarcoma.
- HIV wasting syndrome, a debilitating condition with loss of fat tissue (lipoatrophy), muscle mass and appetite (anorexia), and diarrhea. Treatments that stimulate appetite include the cannabis-related drug dronabinol and megestrol (a progestin).

DIAGNOSTIC TESTING

Diagnostic testing includes an initial screening for HIV antibodies and/or antigens, followed by a confirmatory test that distinguishes HIV-1 from HIV-2. If needed, a nucleic acid test detecting HIV RNA (i.e., viral load) may also be used (see algorithm below). Antibodies can be detected in most people approximately 4 – 12 weeks after infection, but it can take up to 6 months in some cases and repeat testing may be needed.

DIAGNOSTIC TESTING ALGORITHM



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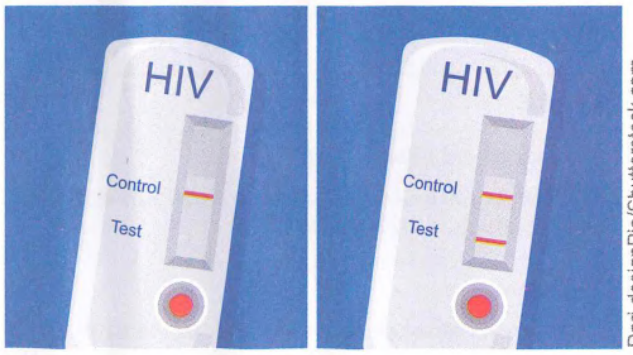
OVER-THE-COUNTER HIV TESTING

The *OraQuick In-Home HIV Test* detects the presence of HIV antibodies and provides immediate results (other OTC test kits require that a sample be sent to a lab). Individuals with a positive *OraQuick* result must follow up with a confirmatory laboratory test (see Diagnostic Testing Algorithm above).

To use the *OraQuick* test, the upper and lower gums are swabbed with a test stick, which is then inserted into a test tube containing liquid. After 20 minutes, the result can be read (see image for interpretation). Testing sooner than 3 months after an exposure can lead to a false negative, due to the lag in antibody production.



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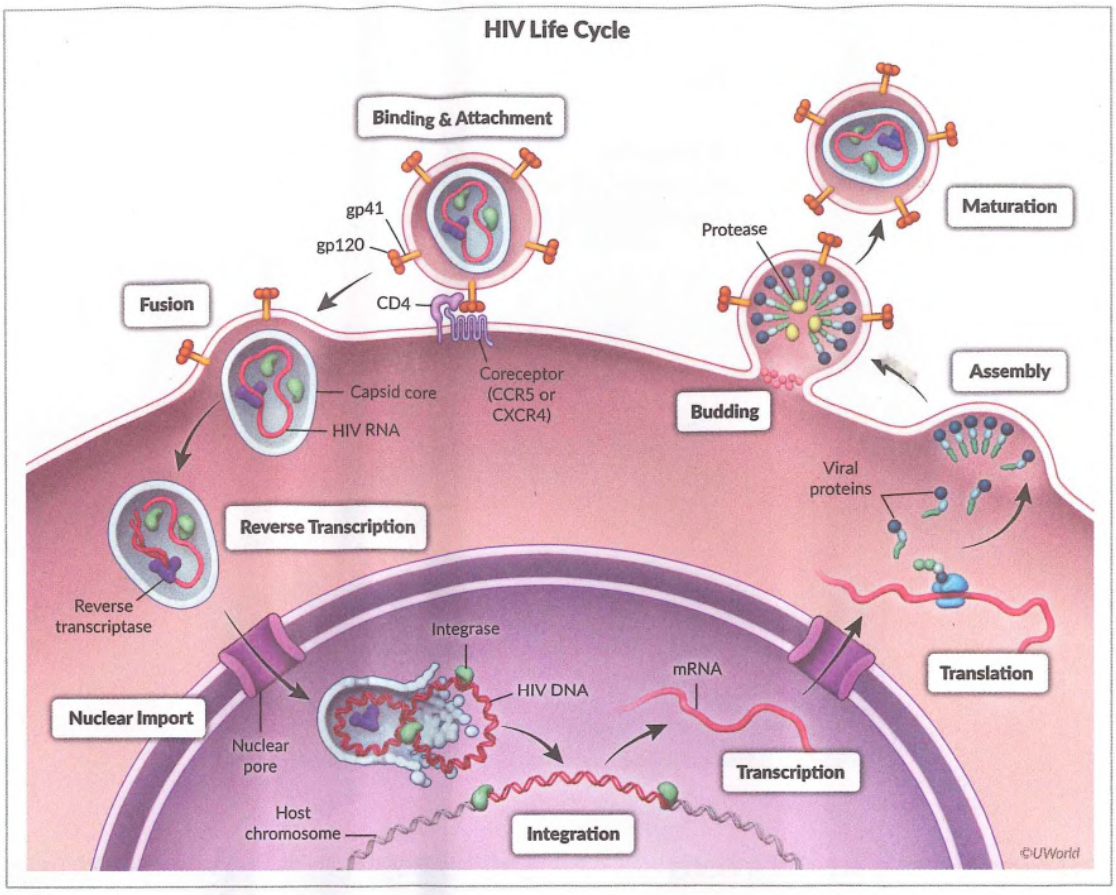
1 line = negative result. The 1st line is the control line, which should always be present (indicates the test is valid).

2 lines = positive result. *OraQuick* is like many other test kits (e.g., pregnancy): 2 lines indicates a positive result.

HIV REPLICATION STAGES AND ANTIRETROVIRAL SITES OF ACTION

It is important to understand the stages involved in HIV viral replication and know where each drug class works.



STAGE	DRUGS/DRUG CLASSES*
1. Binding and Attachment HIV attaches to a CD4 receptor and a co-receptor (CCR5 and/or CXCR4) on the surface of the host CD4 T cell.	CCR5 antagonist: maraviroc Attachment inhibitor: fostemsavir Post-attachment inhibitor: ibalizumab-uiyk
2. Fusion The HIV viral envelope fuses with the cell membrane. HIV enters the cell and releases its inner capsid, containing HIV RNA and viral enzymes.	None
3. Reverse Transcription HIV RNA is converted to HIV DNA by reverse transcriptase (an HIV enzyme).	NRTIs (e.g., emtricitabine) NNRTIs (e.g., rilpivirine)
4. Nuclear Import The HIV capsid is transported into the cell nucleus through a nuclear pore.	Capsid inhibitor: lenacapavir
5. Integration Inside the cell nucleus, integrase (an HIV enzyme) inserts HIV DNA into the host cell DNA.	INSTIs (e.g., bictegravir, dolutegravir)

STAGE	DRUGS/DRUG CLASSES*
6. Transcription and Translation Host cell machinery is used to transcribe and translate HIV DNA into HIV RNA and long-chain proteins (HIV building blocks).	None
7. Assembly New HIV RNA, proteins and enzymes (including protease) assemble at the cell surface.	Capsid inhibitor: lenacapavir
8. Budding and Maturation An immature virus pinches off the cell. Protease (an HIV enzyme) breaks up the long viral protein chains, forming the viral capsid and a mature virus that can infect other cells.	PIs (e.g., darunavir) Capsid inhibitor: lenacapavir

**See Drug Tables later in the chapter for more detail on mechanisms of action for each drug/drug class.*
INSTI = integrase strand transfer inhibitor; NNRTI = non-nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitor; NRTI = nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitor; PI = protease inhibitor

ANTIRETROVIRAL THERAPY

ART regimens allow people with HIV to live long and healthy lives if adherent to treatment. Adherence is also important to prevent resistance to ART, which can develop quickly in patients who miss pills and/or are not taking recommended regimens.

INITIAL EVALUATION AND MONITORING

The initial evaluation and follow-up of patients with HIV is extensive. Vaccinations can be indicated (or contraindicated) based on CD4 count (see Immunizations chapter). Routine lab tests include:

- CD4 count: the major indicator of immune function; determines the need for OI prophylaxis (see the Infectious Diseases IV chapter). The CD4 count increases with ART.
- HIV viral load: indicates how much HIV RNA is in the blood. It is the most important indicator of ART response. The viral load should decrease after starting ART. A high viral load after starting ART can be due to nonadherence or drug resistance.
- HIV resistance testing: detects viral mutations that confer resistance to ART; assists in selecting therapy in treatment-naïve and/or treatment-experienced patients.
- Comprehensive metabolic panel (includes SCr and LFTs), CBC with differential, random or fasting lipid panel, random or fasting blood glucose level and a urinalysis.
- Screen for hepatitis B and C and sexually transmitted infections.
- Pregnancy test (patients of child-bearing potential).
- HLA-B*5701 allele (if considering using abacavir) or a tropism assay (if considering using maraviroc).

TREATMENT INITIATION AND GOALS

ART should be started as soon as possible in all HIV-infected individuals. ART treatment goals include achieving and maintaining an undetectable viral load, restoring and preserving immune function, reducing HIV-associated morbidity (e.g., OIs) and mortality and preventing transmission.

The Study Tip Gal on the next page shows the guideline-recommended initial INSTI-based regimens for most patients with newly diagnosed HIV. The section that follows lists other complete ART regimens that are effective and tolerable if a preferred initial regimen is not suitable for a patient.

PREFERRED INITIAL ART REGIMENS IN MOST TREATMENT-NAÏVE ADULTS

BRAND	GENERIC COMPONENTS
One-Pill, Once Daily (i.e., Single Tablet Regimens)*	
Biktarvy	Bictegravir / emtricitabine / tenofovir alafenamide
Dovato	Dolutegravir / lamivudine
Two-Pills, Once Daily*	
Tivicay* + *Truvada	Dolutegravir + Emtricitabine / tenofovir disoproxil fumarate
Tivicay* + *Descovy	Dolutegravir + Emtricitabine / tenofovir alafenamide

Most HIV medications contain a month's supply in the manufacturer bottle (e.g., 30 tabs for once daily) and should be dispensed in the original container.

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COMMENTS

Most preferred regimens contain 2 NRTIs and 1 INSTI

- Emtricitabine/tenofovir disoproxil fumarate *(Truvada)* or emtricitabine/tenofovir alafenamide *(Descovy)* make up the NRTI backbone in most regimens.
- Lamivudine and emtricitabine are interchangeable but should not be used together (both are cytosine analogs and would be antagonistic if taken together).

***Dovato* (1 NRTI + 1 INSTI) is an exception to the above**

- Do not use in treatment-naïve patients if HIV RNA > 500,000 copies/mL, there is hepatitis B virus (HBV) coinfection (or status is unknown) or HIV resistance testing is not performed (or resistance to either drug component is identified).

Fixed-dose combinations have less flexibility with renal dosing

- *Biktarvy, Dovato, Truvada, Descovy:* do not use if CrCl < 30 mL/min.
  - Except for *Biktarvy,* the individual components of these drugs can be given separately to allow for renal dose adjustments.

**A forward slash ("/") indicates that the generic components are available in the same pill.*

ALTERNATIVE ART REGIMENS

There are multiple ways to "make" alternative ART regimens using single entity and/or combination products (see the Combination Antiretroviral Products tables later in the chapter). These regimens are less ideal because of lower barriers for resistance to develop (except PIs), lower patient tolerability, a higher potential for drug interactions and/or lower efficacy.

ALTERNATIVE ART REGIMENS

A complete HIV ART regimen has one "base" plus two NRTIs to serve as the "backbone." The "base" can be a PI, an NNRTI or an INSTI.

PI-based (boosted with cobicistat or ritonavir)
- Darunavir or atazanavir

NNRTI-based
- Efavirenz, rilpivirine or doravirine

INSTI-based
- Elvitegravir (only available in combination products)
- Raltegravir

NRTI backbone (2 drugs, 1 from each row)
- TDF or TAF or abacavir PLUS
- Emtricitabine or lamivudine

Complete regimen examples
- Rilpivirine + TDF + emtricitabine
- Raltegravir + TAF + emtricitabine

TDF = tenofovir disoproxil fumarate; TAF = tenofovir alafenamide

HIV TREATMENT DURING PREGNANCY

All pregnant patients with HIV should take ART during pregnancy for their own health and to prevent mother-to-child transmission. Most HIV medications are considered safe to use during pregnancy, without an increased risk of birth defects. Since breastfeeding can increase the risk of HIV transmission to the infant, replacement feeding with formula or banked pasteurized milk may be preferred.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TREATMENT-NAÏVE PREGNANT PATIENTS

In most cases, patients who are already taking an effective ART regimen should continue using the same regimen throughout their pregnancy. If not already taking ART, a regimen should be started as soon as possible.

Treatment should consist of three drugs: two NRTIs (e.g., abacavir/lamivudine, tenofovir alafenamide/emtricitabine) plus either an INSTI (dolutegravir preferred) or a boosted PI (darunavir preferred).

PERINATAL TRANSMISSION PROPHYLAXIS

Near the time of delivery, if a pregnant patient is newly diagnosed with HIV, the viral load is greater than 1,000 copies/mL or if the HIV status is unknown, IV zidovudine is administered to the mother to prevent perinatal HIV transmission.

After delivery, ART is recommended for the newborn; the exact regimen and duration of treatment depend on risk (e.g., maternal viral load, ART use during pregnancy).

IMMUNE RECONSTITUTION INFLAMMATORY SYNDROME

Immune reconstitution inflammatory syndrome (IRIS) is a paradoxical (unexpected) worsening of a known underlying condition, or a previously unidentified condition, after ART is started or treatment is changed to a more effective regimen. As the immune system begins to recover, it becomes capable of mounting an inflammatory response, and symptoms of the underlying condition can become unmasked.

Key points about IRIS:

- It is more likely to occur when the CD4 count is low and begins to recover.
- Underlying conditions that can appear or worsen include common OIs, hepatitis B and C, herpes simplex virus (HSV), varicella zoster virus (VZV, shingles) and human herpes virus 8 (associated with the cancer, Kaposi's sarcoma).
- IRIS symptoms can range from mild (most common) to severe and are typically self-limiting. Treatment includes:
  - ☐ Continuation of ART
  - ☐ Symptom management (e.g., fluids); steroids may be needed in severe cases
  - ☐ Anti-infectives for the likely causative pathogen (i.e., OI)

DRUGS USED IN ART REGIMENS

DRUGS IN CLASS	MECHANISM OF ACTION	ADMINISTRATION
Nucleoside Reverse Transcriptase Inhibitors (NRTIs)*		
Abacavir *(Ziagen)* **Emtricitabine** *(Emtriva)* **Lamivudine** *(Epivir)* **Tenofovir disoproxil fumarate,** TDF ***(Viread)*** **Tenofovir alafenamide,** TAF Only in combination products for HIV; ***Vemlidy*** is a single-entity product for HBV **Zidovudine** *(Retrovir)*	Competitively inhibit the reverse transcriptase enzyme, preventing the conversion of HIV RNA to HIV DNA NRTIs have a low barrier to resistance (i.e., resistance develops easily) **NAME TIP...** Remember the NRTIs with **Z ♥ LATTE**	Tenofovir (both formulations): once daily Abacavir and lamivudine: once daily and twice daily regimens Zidovudine: twice daily All NRTIs, except abacavir: adjust dose in renal impairment (may need to administer combination tablets as dose-adjusted individual components, if available) TDF oral powder: mix with 2 – 4 oz of soft food (applesauce, yogurt) to avoid a bitter taste; contains lactose Zidovudine: administered IV during labor and delivery to prevent perinatal HIV transmission to the newborn

**Many NRTI combination products are available; see the Combination Antiretroviral Products section later in the chapter.*

NRTI KEY FEATURES AND SAFETY ISSUES

All NRTIs

- Warning: lactic acidosis and hepatomegaly with steatosis (fatty liver); boxed warning for zidovudine
- Common side effects: nausea, diarrhea

HBV and HIV Coinfection Boxed Warnings

- Severe acute HBV exacerbation can occur if emtricitabine, lamivudine or tenofovir-containing products are discontinued
- Lamivudine doses for HBV will not treat HIV (dose too low), co-infected patients need the higher dose used for HIV

Abacavir

- Boxed warning: risk for hypersensitivity reaction (HSR)
  - Screen for HLA-B*5701 allele before starting; abacavir is contraindicated if positive (↑ risk of HSR)
  - Patients must carry a medication card indicating that HSR (e.g., fever, rash, N/V/D, fatigue, dyspnea, cough) is an emergency
  - Never re-challenge patients with a history of HSR

Emtricitabine

- Hyperpigmentation of the palms of the hands or soles of the feet

Tenofovir Formulations

- Higher Risk with TDF vs. TAF
  - Renal impairment, including acute renal failure and Fanconi syndrome (renal tubular injury and electrolyte abnormalities)
  - Decreased bone mineral density: consider calcium/vitamin D supplementation and DEXA scan if at risk
- TAF is associated with lipid abnormalities
  - Monitor lipids if switching from TDF to TAF

Zidovudine

- Hematologic toxicity: neutropenia and anemia; macrocytosis (high MCV) is a sign of adherence

DRUGS IN CLASS	MECHANISM OF ACTION	ADMINISTRATION
Integrase Strand Transfer Inhibitors (INSTIs)		
Bictegravir Only in the combination drug ***Biktarvy***	Block the integrase enzyme, preventing HIV DNA from inserting into the host cell DNA	Once daily: *Biktarvy, Stribild, Genvoya, Isentress HD, Tivicay, Triumeq* and *Dovato (Tivicay* can be twice daily for treatment-experienced patients, those with INSTI resistance or if taking UGT1A1 or CYP3A4 inducers) Twice daily: *Isentress* CrCl < 70 mL/min: do not start *Stribild* CrCl < 50 mL/min: discontinue *Stribild* CrCl < 30 mL/min: do not start *Biktarvy* or *Genvoya* Cabotegravir PO *(Vocabria)*: indicated for optional lead-in treatment to assess tolerability prior to initiation of cabotegravir/rilpivirine *(Cabenuva)* injection, or as bridge therapy in patients who will miss a scheduled cabotegravir/rilpivirine injection for > 7 days Cabotegravir extended-release IM injection *(Apretude)*: indicated only for pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP); see HIV Prevention Strategies later in chapter
Cabotegravir *(Vocabria, **Apretude**)* A component of ***Cabenuva***		
Dolutegravir ***(Tivicay)*** A component of ***Triumeq, Dovato*** and *Juluca*		
Elvitegravir Only in the combination drugs ***Genvoya*** and ***Stribild***		
Raltegravir ***(Isentress, Isentress HD)***		

NAME TIPS...
Generic names end in "-tegravir"

Remember the INSTIs with **B CRED**

INSTI KEY FEATURES AND SAFETY ISSUES

Side Effects and Warnings

- All INSTIs: weight gain, insomnia, rare risk of depression and suicidal ideation in patients with pre-existing psychiatric conditions
- Bictegravir, dolutegravir: ↑ SCr (by inhibiting tubular secretion) with no effect on GFR
- Raltegravir, dolutegravir:
  - ↑ CPK, myopathy and rhabdomyolysis
  - Hypersensitivity reaction (HSR): syndrome of rash, fever and symptoms of an allergic reaction
- Dolutegravir: hepatotoxicity (especially if coinfection with hepatitis B or C)
- Cabotegravir intramuscular: injection site reactions

Drug Interactions with Polyvalent Cations (↓ INSTI Absorption)

- In general, separate oral INSTIs from polyvalent cations (e.g., antacids, supplements) as taking them together can cause chelation, which can decrease efficacy*; exact timing (i.e., separation) may vary depending on the product

Cations and oral INSTIs do not go together!

Take INSTI **2 hours before** or **6 hours after** products containing Al, Ca, Mg or Fe

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Dolutegravir and bictegravir can be taken with calcium- or iron-containing supplements if also taken with food.

DRUGS IN CLASS	MECHANISM OF ACTION	ADMINISTRATION
Non-Nucleoside Reverse Transcriptase Inhibitors (NNRTIs)		
Doravirine *(Pifeltro)* Component of ***Delstrigo***	Non-competitively inhibit the reverse transcriptase enzyme, preventing the conversion of HIV RNA to HIV DNA	**Rilpivirine** ■ Oral formulation □ Take with a meal and water (do not substitute with a protein drink) □ Requires an acidic environment for absorption (see Study Tip Gal below) ■ IM formulation (component of *Cabenuva*)
Efavirenz Component of *Symfi, Symfi Lo*		
Rilpivirine *(Edurant)* Component of ***Complera, Odefsey, Cabenuva,*** *Juluca*	NNRTIs have a lower barrier to resistance than INSTIs or PIs	**Efavirenz** ■ Food increases the bioavailability and risk for CNS effects; take on an empty stomach QHS to decrease (and sleep through) CNS effects
Etravirine *(Intelence)*	**NAME TIPS...** Generic names contain "-vir-" Remember the NNRTIs with **REDEN**	
Nevirapine		

NNRTI KEY FEATURES AND SAFETY ISSUES

Used in alternative ART regimens (not first line in most patients): 1 NNRTI plus 2 NRTIs

All NNRTIs
- Hepatotoxicity and rash/severe rash, including SJS/TEN: highest risk with nevirapine

Efavirenz
- Psychiatric symptoms (depression, suicidal thoughts)
- CNS effects (dizziness, impaired concentration, abnormal dreams, confusion), resolves in 2 – 4 weeks in most patients
- ↑ total cholesterol and triglycerides

Drug Interactions
- All NNRTIs are major CYP3A4 substrates (and some are substrates of other CYP enzymes)
  - □ Rilpivirine and doravirine: do not use with strong CYP3A4 inducers (phenytoin, rifampin, rifapentine, carbamazepine, oxcarbazepine, phenobarbital, St. John's wort)
- Efavirenz and etravirine are moderate CYP3A4 inducers (many drug interactions)
- Rilpivirine and acid suppressants (see box to the right)

Rilpivirine
- Depression
- ↑ SCr with no effect on GFR
- Do not use if initial viral load > 100,000 copies/mL or CD4 count < 200 cells/mm^3 (higher failure rate)
- *Cabenuva* IM: injection site reactions

Rilpivirine needs an acidic gut for absorption.

DO NOT USE WITH PPIs

Separate H2RAs
Take H2RAs at least 12 hours before or 4 hours after rilpivirine

Separate Antacids
Take antacids at least 2 hours before or 4 hours after rilpivirine*

**Approximate; separation times vary between products.*

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Steve Cukrov/stock.adobe.com

DRUGS IN CLASS	MECHANISM OF ACTION	ADMINISTRATION
Protease Inhibitors (PIs)		
Atazanavir *(Reyataz)* Component of *Evotaz* **Darunavir *(Prezista)*** Component of ***Symtuza*** and *Prezcobix* Fosamprenavir Lopinavir / ritonavir* *(Kaletra)* Tipranavir *(Aptivus)*	Inhibit the HIV protease enzyme, preventing long viral protein chains from being broken down into the smaller chains needed to produce mature (infectious) virus during the budding and maturation stage of the HIV life cycle PIs (especially darunavir) have a high barrier to resistance **NAME TIP...** Generic names end in "-navir"	**All PIs** ■ Recommended to take with a booster (ritonavir or cobicistat) ■ No renal dose adjustments **Darunavir and atazanavir** ■ Take with food to ↓ GI upset **Atazanavir** ■ Needs an acidic gut for absorption (see Study Tip Gal below) **Ritonavir** ■ A protease inhibitor, but only used at low doses for pharmacokinetic boosting (see Boosters table on the next page)

Co-formulated

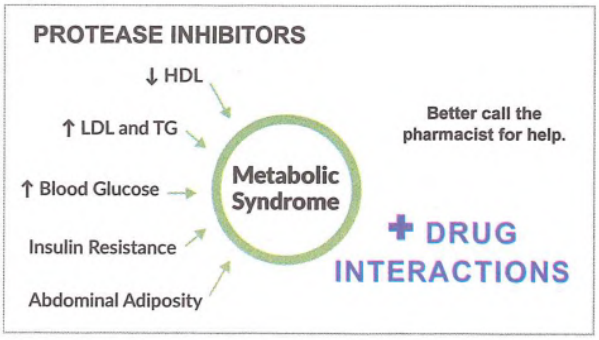
PI KEY FEATURES AND SAFETY ISSUES

Used in alternative ART regimens (not first line in most patients):
1 PI (boosted with ritonavir or cobicistat) plus 2 NRTIs

All PIs
- Metabolic abnormalities: hyperglycemia/insulin resistance, dyslipidemia (↑ LDL, ↑ TGs), ↑ body fat and lipodystrophy
  - PIs ↑ CVD risk
- Hepatic dysfunction: ↑ LFTs, hepatitis and/or exacerbation of pre-existing hepatic disease
- Hypersensitivity reactions: rash (including SJS/TEN), angioedema, bronchospasm, anaphylaxis
- Common side effects: diarrhea, nausea
- All PIs are major CYP3A4 substrates and most are strong CYP inhibitors (see Drug Interactions Study Tip Gal on the next page)
  - Strong CYP3A4 inducers ↓ PI concentrations

Darunavir
- Caution with sulfa allergy*

Lopinavir/Ritonavir *(Kaletra)*
- Oral solution contains 42% alcohol: can cause a disulfiram reaction if taken with metronidazole



Atazanavir
- Hyperbilirubinemia (jaundice or scleral icterus): reversible, does not require discontinuation
- Requires acidic gut for absorption:
  - Separate from antacids and H2RAs
  - Avoid PPIs with unboosted atazanavir; take boosted atazanavir at least 12 hours after the PPI (dose should not exceed omeprazole 20 mg or equivalent)

Fosamprenavir and tipranavir also contain a sulfa moiety.

DRUGS	ADMINISTRATION	KEY FEATURES
Pharmacokinetic Boosters (Enhancers)		
Ritonavir *(Norvir)* Oral powder and tablet Component of *Kaletra* and *Paxlovid* (for COVID-19) **Cobicistat *(Tybost)*** Oral tablet Component of ***Genvoya, Stribild, Symtuza,*** *Prezcobix* and *Evotaz*	**Ritonavir** 100 to 200 mg PO once or twice daily with the boosted drug (e.g., darunavir, atazanavir) and with food (improves tolerability) **Cobicistat** 150 mg PO daily with the boosted drug and with food ↑ SCr with no effect on GFR	■ Ritonavir and cobicistat are inhibitors of CYP3A4. They inhibit ART metabolism (e.g., PIs, elvitegravir), which increases (boosts) the ART level and therapeutic effect. ■ Ritonavir is a PI that is only used as a booster because it is not well tolerated at the higher doses needed for antiretroviral activity. Booster dosing is lower than treatment dosing (less metabolic side effects). ■ Ritonavir and cobicistat are not interchangeable. Do not use both together. ■ Both have many drug interactions (see Study Tip Ga! below).

PI AND PK BOOSTER DRUG INTERACTIONS

Knowing which ART combinations contain PIs and/or PK boosters can help to identify interactions with other CYP substrates, inhibitors and inducers.

There is a greater risk of drug interactions with boosted PIs than with ritonavir or cobicistat alone, but a similar interaction is expected; it is always important to perform an interaction check.

Drugs that are contraindicated or should generally be avoided with boosted PIs due to a significant interaction*:

- Alpha-1A blockers (alfuzosin, silodosin, tamsulosin)
- Amiodarone, dronedarone
- Anticoagulants/antiplatelets: apixaban, rivaroxaban, ticagrelor
- Azole antifungals (voriconazole, posaconazole, itraconazole, isavuconazole)
- Hepatitis C protease inhibitors (e.g., grazoprevir, glecaprevir)
- Lovastatin and simvastatin (pitavastatin, rosuvastatin or atorvastatin preferred to treat dyslipidemia)
- PDE-5 inhibitors used for pulmonary hypertension (sildenafil, tadalafil)
- Strong CYP3A4 inducers (e.g., carbamazepine, phenytoin, rifampin, St. John's wort)
- Systemic, inhaled and intranasal steroids (except beclomethasone)

**List not all inclusive, includes common drugs that could be tested.*

DRUGS	MECHANISM OF ACTION	SAFETY ISSUES AND NOTES
Entry and Attachment Inhibitors		
CCR5 Antagonist Maraviroc *(Selzentry)* Tablet, solution	Blocks HIV from binding (and subsequently entering) the CD4 cell in virus strains that use the CCR5 co-receptor	**SAFETY ISSUES** Hepatotoxicity (boxed warning), hypersensitivity reactions (including SJS/TEN), orthostatic hypotension in patients with renal impairment Do not use if severe renal impairment (CrCl < 30 mL/min) and taking potent CYP3A4 inhibitors/inducers **BASELINE TEST REQUIRED** Must have tropism assay results before starting (determines if the HIV strain can only bind to the CCR5 co-receptor) If the HIV strain can bind to CXCR4 or mixed (CXCR4/CCR5) co-receptors, maraviroc will not work and HIV will still be able to enter the CD4 cell
Attachment Inhibitor Fostemsavir *(Rukobia)* Tablet	Converted to temsavir (active form), which binds to the gp120 subunit of HIV envelope proteins, inhibiting the interaction between the virus and the CD4 host cell	**SAFETY ISSUES** Do not use with strong CYP3A4 inducers Maintain effective HBV treatment if coinfected with HBV Can ↑ SCr (higher risk if underlying renal disease) **NOTES** Indicated in combination with other ARTs in heavily treatment-experienced patients who are failing current therapy
Post-Attachment Inhibitor Ibalizumab-uiyk *(Trogarzo)* IV (administered by a healthcare professional)	Monoclonal antibody that binds to a select domain of CD4 cell receptors, blocking entry of the virus into the cell	**SAFETY ISSUES** Infusion-related reactions (observe for 1 hour after the first infusion), diarrhea, dizziness, nausea, rash **NOTES** Indicated in combination with other ARTs in heavily treatment-experienced patients who are failing current therapy
Capsid Inhibitor		
Lenacapavir *(Sunlenca)* Tablet, SC injection Oral loading dose, followed by SC injection every 6 months	Inhibits multiple stages of the HIV life cycle, including capsid transport into the nucleus, virus assembly and capsid formation, resulting in a malformed capsid	**SAFETY ISSUES** Contraindicated with strong CYP3A4 inducers Injection site reactions: erythema, induration, nodule, swelling **NOTES** Indicated in combination with other ARTs in heavily treatment-experienced patients who are failing current therapy

COMBINATION ANTIRETROVIRAL PRODUCTS

Combination products lower the pill burden and improve adherence. The table below lists commonly used combination drugs and pertinent notes. Additional notes on "first-line" (preferred initial) regimens are presented earlier in the chapter.

SINGLE TABLET REGIMENS

GENERIC NAME	BRAND	NOTES
Complete regimens (1 tablet once daily unless noted).		
INSTI-based		
Bictegravir / emtricitabine / TAF	***Biktarvy***	*Biktarvy, Dovato:* first line. *Cabenuva:* administered IM once monthly by a healthcare professional (may be preceded by lead-in treatment with oral cabotegravir to assess tolerability). *Cabenuva* and *Juluca:* only indicated to replace a stable ART regimen in patients with virologic suppression and no history of treatment failure or known resistance. CrCl < 50 mL/min: do not start TDF-containing products (< 70 mL/min for *Stribild*). CrCl < 30 mL/min: do not start TAF-containing products. *Stribild, Genvoya:* take with food (due to cobicistat component).
Cabotegravir / rilpivirine	***Cabenuva***	
Dolutegravir / abacavir / lamivudine	***Triumeq***	
Dolutegravir / lamivudine	***Dovato***	
Dolutegravir / rilpivirine	*Juluca*	
Elvitegravir / cobicistat / emtricitabine / TDF	***Stribild***	
Elvitegravir / cobicistat / emtricitabine / TAF	***Genvoya***	
NNRTI-based		
Doravirine / lamivudine / tenofovir disoproxil fumarate	***Delstrigo***	Same renal dosing criteria as above for tenofovir-containing products. Efavirenz-containing products: take on an empty stomach. Rilpivirine-containing products: take with food.
Efavirenz / emtricitabine / tenofovir disoproxil fumarate		
Efavirenz / lamivudine / tenofovir disoproxil fumarate	*Symfi, Symfi Lo*	
Rilpivirine / emtricitabine / tenofovir disoproxil fumarate	***Complera***	
Rilpivirine / emtricitabine / tenofovir alafenamide	***Odefsey***	
PI-based		
Darunavir / cobicistat / emtricitabine / tenofovir alafenamide	***Symtuza***	Take with food. Do not start if CrCl < 30 mL/min (contains tenofovir alafenamide).

OTHER COMBINATION PRODUCTS

GENERIC NAME	BRAND	NOTES
Must be used with additional ARTs to make a complete regimen.		
NRTI Combination Products (1 tablet daily unless noted)		
Abacavir / lamivudine	*Epzicom**	*Epzicom:* requires baseline testing for HLA-B*5701 (contains abacavir). *Descovy, Truvada:* part of first-line regimens. Do not use if CrCl < 30 mL/min [< 60 mL/min for *Truvada* if using for PrEP (see HIV Prevention Strategies section)]. *Combivir:* twice daily. *Cimduo:* do not use if CrCl < 50 mL/min.
Emtricitabine / tenofovir alafenamide	***Descovy***	
Emtricitabine / tenofovir disoproxil fumarate	***Truvada***	
Lamivudine / zidovudine	*Combivir**	
Lamivudine / tenofovir disoproxil fumarate	*Cimduo*	
PI Combination Products (1 tablet daily)		
Atazanavir / cobicistat	*Evotaz*	Take cobicistat-containing products with food.
Darunavir / cobicistat	*Prezcobix*	

**Brand discontinued but name still used in practice.*

HIV PREVENTION STRATEGIES

TREATMENT AS PREVENTION

Treatment of HIV with current ART regimens is so effective that patients can achieve a viral load low enough to prevent infecting other people. When appropriate, PrEP and PEP are other ways to reduce HIV infection risk before or after exposure (see the Study Tip Gal on the next page).

PRE-EXPOSURE PROPHYLAXIS (PrEP)

Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is a strategy of prescribing ART to prevent HIV infection in patients who engage in high-risk activities.

PrEP TREATMENT OPTIONS

- An oral regimen of either *Truvada* or *Descovy*, taken daily, with no more than a 90-day supply provided at a time.
- A long-acting intramuscular injection of cabotegravir administered by a healthcare provider monthly for 2 doses, then every 2 months.

BEFORE STARTING PrEP

- Confirm the patient is HIV-negative with an HIV antigen/antibody blood test (PrEP regimens are not appropriate to treat a person with HIV as resistance to commonly used treatments can develop).
- Ask about recent symptoms that could indicate HIV infection, due to the lag time in detectable antibody.
- Confirm CrCl ≥ 60 mL/min (if using *Truvada)* or ≥ 30 mL/min (if using *Descovy)*. (Note: the CrCl cutoff for *Truvada* is higher for PrEP than for HIV treatment.)
- Screen for hepatitis B (if using oral PrEP) and sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

PrEP FOLLOW-UP VISITS

At each visit, test for HIV and confirm a negative result before refilling or administering PrEP treatment:

- *Truvada* and *Descovy:* follow up every 3 months.
- Cabotegravir: follow up 1 month after the first injection, then every 2 months.

Screening for STIs and monitoring of renal function and other drug adverse effects (e.g., lipid abnormalities with *Descovy)* is recommended during follow-up visits, but the suggested frequency varies.

POST-EXPOSURE PROPHYLAXIS (PEP)

Post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) is for emergency situations when a non-infected person is exposed to body fluids that are known to be or could be infected with HIV. The two types of PEP are: nonoccupational (nPEP) and occupational (oPEP).

- nPEP is for people exposed after sex without a condom (e.g., condom broke, sexual assault), injection drug use or other type of nonoccupational exposure.
- oPEP is for healthcare personnel who are exposed to body fluids that could be infectious, such as from a needlestick injury.
- For both types, treatment should be started as soon as possible within 72 hours (3 days) of the exposure and continued for 28 days.
- The exposed individual should receive a baseline HIV antibody test and a follow-up test at 4 – 6 weeks, 3 months and 6 months after the exposure.

PrEP OR PEP?

PrEP or PEP to Prevent HIV

EP = Exposure Prophylaxis

Start PrEP only in patients with a NEGATIVE HIV Test

PrEP

Start before high-risk activity

Oral drug taken **daily**: *Truvada* or *Descovy**

or

IM drug taken monthly × 2 doses, then **every 2 months**: cabotegravir *(Apretude)*

PEP

Start ASAP after HIV exposure, continue for **28 days**

More drugs needed!
Actual possible exposure!

Truvada (if CrCl ≥ 60) +

Dolutegravir *(Tivicay)* or

Raltegravir *(Isentress)*

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*Descovy: not approved for PrEP in patients assigned female at birth (i.e., at risk of getting HIV from vaginal sex), and not approved for PEP.

KEY COUNSELING POINTS

See the Drug Formulations and Patient Counseling chapter for counseling language/layman's terminology.

ALL HIV MEDICATIONS

- Do not skip doses or stop taking HIV medications unless instructed to do so by your healthcare provider (see box on next page); get refills before running out.
- This medication is not a cure for HIV. Do not share needles or other drug mixing equipment. Use safe sex practices.
- Can cause significant GI upset, but this usually subsides after 3 – 4 weeks of therapy.
- IRIS: do not stop taking ART; notify your healthcare provider of a new or worsening condition.

ALL NRTIs

- If you have hepatitis B, do not stop taking this medication without discussing with your provider; severe worsening of liver disease can occur.
- Can cause lactic acidosis.

ABACAVIR

- Before using this medication, your blood should be tested to see if you are at risk for a severe reaction.

EMTRICITABINE

- This medication can cause darkened spots on the palms of the hands and on the soles of the feet.

TENOFOVIR DISOPROXIL FUMARATE AND TENOFOVIR ALAFENAMIDE

- Can cause (less with alafenamide):
  - ☐ Kidney impairment.
  - ☐ Low bone density/fracture risk.

ALL INSTIs

- This medication can interact with antacids. Take 2 hours before or 6 hours after this medication.

ALL NNRTIs

- Can cause:
  - ☐ Rash/severe rash.
  - ☐ Hepatotoxicity.

EFAVIRENZ

- Take at bedtime on an empty stomach to reduce side effects.
- Can cause (at the start, improves in 2 – 4 weeks):
  - ☐ Depression/psychosis.
  - ☐ Confusion and abnormal dreams.

RILPIVIRINE

- Take with a full meal (not a protein drink) and water.
- Do not use proton pump inhibitors; take H2RAs 12 hours before or 4 hours after, and antacids 2 hours before or 4 hours after rilpivirine.
- Can cause depression.

ALL PIs

- Can cause high blood glucose, high triglycerides or body fat redistribution.

ATAZANAVIR OR DARUNAVIR

- If taking ritonavir or cobicistat, make sure to take both at the same time.
- Take with food to decrease GI upset.

ATAZANAVIR

- Do not take with acid-suppressing medications.
- Can cause hyperbilirubinemia.

DARUNAVIR

- Caution with sulfa allergy.

STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE ADHERENCE TO ANTIRETROVIRAL THERAPY

A multidisciplinary team approach (e.g., nurses, social workers, pharmacists, psychologists, physicians).

Accessible, non-judgmental healthcare team; establish a trusting relationship with the patient.

Evaluate the patient's knowledge of HIV disease, prevention and treatment, and provide information as needed; establish patient readiness to start ART and involve them in ART regimen selection.

Identify potential barriers to adherence (e.g., cognitive or psychosocial issues, substance abuse, low literacy, busy daily schedule, lack of prescription coverage or social support).

Assess adherence at every clinic visit, and simplify ART regimen when possible; provide positive reinforcement to foster adherence success.

Identify nonadherence and reasons for nonadherence (e.g., adverse effects from medications, complex regimen, difficulty swallowing large pills, forgetfulness, pill fatigue, food requirements, stigma, change or lapse of insurance coverage).

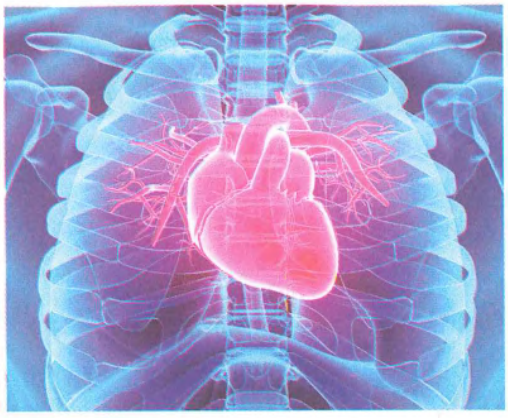
Provide resources (e.g., referrals for mental health and/or substance abuse treatment, prescription drug assistance programs, pillboxes, reminder tools, medication lists, calendars).

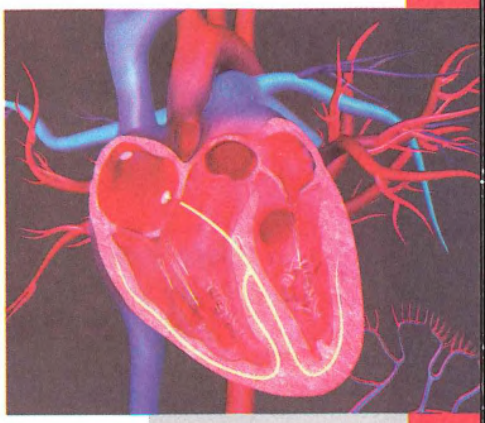
Select Guidelines/References

Guidelines for the Use of Antiretroviral Agents in Adults and Adolescents with HIV. Department of Health and Human Services. Available at: https://clinicalinfo.hiv.gov/en/guidelines/hiv-clinical-guidelines-adult-and-adolescent-arv/whats-new (accessed 2025 Feb 4).

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: US Public Health Service: Preexposure Prophylaxis for the Prevention of HIV Infection in the United States – 2021 Update. Available at: https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/pdf/risk/prep/cdc-hiv-prep-guidelines-2021.pdf (accessed 2025 Feb 17).

CARDIOVASCULAR CONDITIONS





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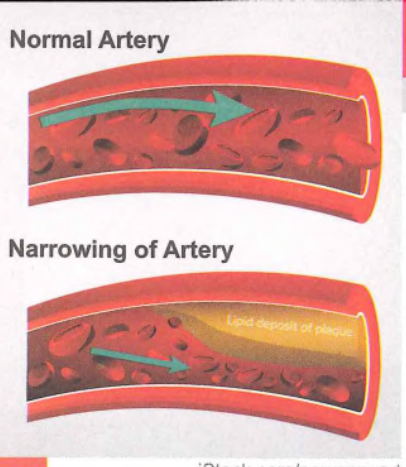

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CHAPTER 27

DYSLIPIDEMIA

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= Study Tip Gal = Key Drugs Guy = Required Formula

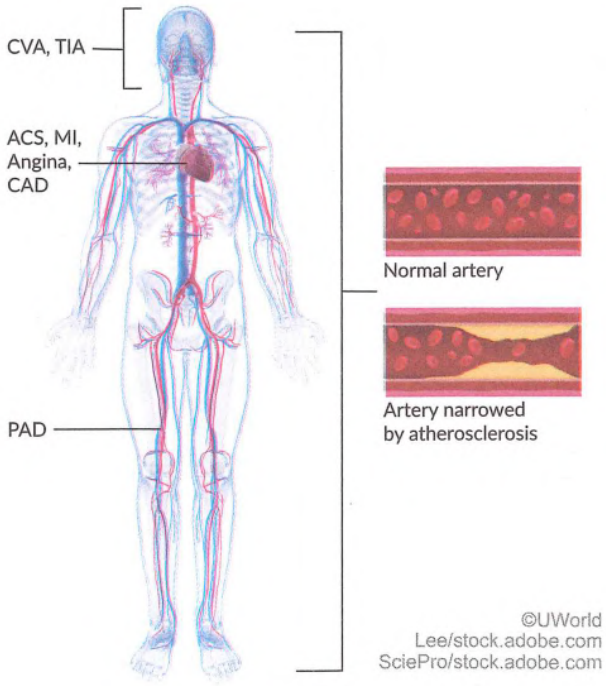
BACKGROUND

Cholesterol is a component of cell walls, a precursor in hormone synthesis and is used to produce bile acids. Bile acids are needed to absorb lipids and fat-soluble vitamins. They are produced in the liver, then travel through the bile ducts (with free cholesterol and waste products) into the small intestine. A portion of cholesterol is fecally eliminated either as free cholesterol or as bile acid and remaining bile acids are converted to bile salts, which return to the liver. This process of enterohepatic recycling affects both cholesterol and drug levels (see the Drug Interactions and Pharmacokinetics chapters).

ATHEROSCLEROSIS AND ASCVD

Although cholesterol is an essential substance in the body, elevated cholesterol increases the risk of atherosclerosis, which is the formation of plaque on the inner walls of the arteries from a buildup of fats, cholesterol and other substances.

Atherosclerosis is asymptomatic, but can lead to atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease (ASCVD), which includes stroke/transient ischemic attack, myocardial infarction, stable angina and peripheral arterial disease (see image below).



CHOLESTEROL (LIPOPROTEIN) TYPES AND NORMAL VALUES

Total cholesterol (TC) includes three types of lipoproteins: low-density lipoprotein (LDL), high-density lipoprotein (HDL) and very-low density lipoprotein (VLDL). These different types of cholesterol protect from or contribute to ASCVD risk.

- HDL ("good" cholesterol) takes cholesterol from the blood and delivers it to the liver for removal from the body. High HDL lowers ASCVD risk.
- Non-HDL includes the lipoproteins that contribute to ASCVD risk, such as LDL, VLDL and lipoprotein(a).
  - Non-HDL is a strong predictor of ASCVD.
  - Non-HDL calculation: non-HDL = TC − HDL
- High triglycerides (TGs), or hypertriglyceridemia, is associated with high ASCVD risk. TGs ≥ 500 mg/dL can cause acute pancreatitis.

DETERMINING LDL CHOLESTEROL

TC, HDL and LDL levels can be assessed with either a fasting or nonfasting sample in most situations. A 9 – 12 hour fast is primarily needed for TG, which can be falsely elevated after eating.

A fasting sample is needed when the LDL is not measured directly but calculated using the Friedewald equation:

$$LDL = TC - HDL - \frac{TG}{5}$$

This formula is not used when TGs are > 400 mg/dL; a falsely elevated TG level (i.e., the patient has not fasted) can result in a falsely low LDL calculation.

CASE SCENARIO

JS is a 47-year-old male with dyslipidemia and type 2 diabetes. He stopped taking his simvastatin 5 months ago due to muscle aches. His cholesterol panel results are: TC 202 mg/dL, HDL 36 mg/dL, TG 280 mg/dL.

Calculate the patient's LDL cholesterol:

Use the Friedewald equation:
LDL = TC − HDL − (TG/5)

$$202 - 36 - \frac{280}{5} = 110 \text{ mg/dL}$$

INTERPRETATION OF LIPID LEVELS

NON-HDL	
< 130 mg/dL	Desirable
LDL	
< 100 mg/dL	Desirable
≥ 190 mg/dL	Very high
HDL	
≥ 40 mg/dL (men)	Desirable
≥ 50 mg/dL (women)	Desirable
Triglycerides	
< 150 mg/dL	Desirable
≥ 500 mg/dL	Very high*

HDL = high-density lipoprotein, LDL = low-density lipoprotein

**Severe hypertriglyceridemia is another term used for very high triglycerides.*

SELECT DRUGS AND CONDITIONS THAT INCREASE LIPID LEVELS

↑ LDL and TG

Diuretics: loops, thiazides

HIV medications: efavirenz, protease inhibitors

Atypical antipsychotics (e.g., olanzapine, quetiapine)

Immunosuppressants (e.g., cyclosporine, tacrolimus, systemic steroids)

↑ LDL Only

Fibrates

Fish oils (except *Vascepa)*

↑ TG Only

IV lipid emulsions (e.g., propofol, clevidipine)

Bile acid sequestrants

Conditions

Diabetes mellitus, metabolic syndrome, smoking, hypothyroidism, renal/liver disease, alcohol use disorder

CLASSIFICATION OF DYSLIPIDEMIA

Abnormal lipoprotein levels, called dyslipidemia or hypercholesterolemia, can be familial (genetic cause) or secondary (due to lifestyle and/or medical conditions).

FAMILIAL

Familial hypercholesterolemia (FH) is caused by genetic defects that result in severe cholesterol elevations. It includes heterozygous and homozygous familial hypercholesterolemia (HeFH and HoFH).

SECONDARY (OR ACQUIRED)

Dyslipidemia is most often caused by diet and a lack of physical activity. Medical conditions and select drugs can also cause or contribute to dyslipidemia (see Key Drugs Guy to the right).

TREATMENT PRINCIPLES

Treatment of dyslipidemia is important, as lowering LDL by 1% reduces ASCVD risk by 1%. The American College of Cardiology and American Heart Association (ACC/AHA) develops guidelines for cholesterol management. Recommendations for managing cholesterol in certain populations are also addressed in disease-specific guidelines (e.g., the ADA guidelines discuss cholesterol management in patients with diabetes).

Cholesterol levels can be decreased by reducing the formation (as with statins and bempedoic acid), blocking intestinal absorption (as with ezetimibe), increasing clearance from circulation (as with proprotein convertase subtilisin/kexin type 9 monoclonal antibodies) or blocking enterohepatic recirculation of bile salts (as with bile acid sequestrants).

CALCULATING ASCVD RISK

An online ASCVD risk calculator can provide an estimate of an individual's risk of having a first cardiovascular event (e.g., MI, stroke) during the next 10 years. Healthcare providers use the estimated risk to determine whether they should prescribe risk-reducing treatments, including statins and antihypertensives. The clinician inputs the patient's:

- Sex, age (40 – 79 years), race and smoking status.
- TC, HDL and LDL, and whether a statin is used.
- Blood pressure, and whether antihypertensive treatment is used.
- Diabetes history and aspirin use.

A risk score is not needed for patients with clinical ASCVD, diabetes or LDL ≥ 190 mg/dL, as all patients in these groups should be started on a statin.

If a treatment decision is still uncertain based on the calculated risk, then additional risk-enhancing factors should be considered. These factors include a family history of premature ASCVD, metabolic syndrome, chronic kidney disease, history of preeclampsia or premature menopause, chronic inflammatory disorders, high CRP, high coronary artery calcium (CAC) score and abnormal ankle brachial index. The CAC score gives an indirect measure of plaque burden in coronary arteries and is helpful in deciding if statins should be initiated in those with an intermediate to high 10-year ASCVD risk (i.e., 7.5 – 19.9%). A CAC score of ≥ 100 Agatston units is a widely accepted threshold for initiation of statin therapy.

NON-DRUG TREATMENT

Lifestyle modifications are important for dyslipidemia management and include:

- Consuming a diet to maintain a healthy weight (BMI 18.5 – 24.9 kg/m^2). The diet should be rich in vegetables, fruits, whole grains and fiber (e.g., plant-based diets, Mediterranean diet) and include healthy protein sources (e.g., poultry, fish, nuts). Limit intake of saturated fat, trans fat, sweets, sugar-sweetened beverages and red meat.
- Engaging in aerobic physical activity 3 – 4 times per week, lasting 40 minutes/session. Avoiding tobacco products and limiting alcohol use.

NATURAL PRODUCTS

Products that can be effective at lowering LDL include red yeast rice, which contains naturally occurring HMG-CoA reductase inhibitors in varying amounts, plant sterols and fibrous foods (found in psyllium, barley and oat bran).

OTC fish oils can be used to lower TG, but some products can increase LDL. Garlic is generally considered ineffective for dyslipidemia.

DRUG TREATMENT

Statins are the drugs of choice for treating high LDL. If a patient needs additional LDL lowering or experiences statin-associated adverse effects, other cholesterol-lowering drugs may be used. Guidelines focus on adding ezetimibe and/or a proprotein convertase subtilisin/kexin type 9 monoclonal antibody (PCSK9 mAb) because of their effective LDL lowering and demonstrated cardiovascular benefits. The use of bempedoic acid and inclisiran is increasing due to growing evidence regarding their efficacy.

LIVER DAMAGE

Many cholesterol-lowering drugs cause liver damage (niacin, fibrates, potentially statins and ezetimibe). These drugs should not be used if the AST or ALT is > 3 times the upper limit of normal, and LFTs should be monitored during treatment.

STATINS

Statins inhibit the enzyme 3-hydroxy-3-methylglutaryl coenzyme A (HMG-CoA) reductase, which prevents the conversion of HMG-CoA to mevalonate. This is the rate-limiting step in cholesterol synthesis.

Statins are grouped by intensity based on their LDL-lowering ability (see table on the next page) and patients are categorized into statin benefit groups to determine the appropriate statin intensity at treatment initiation (see Study Tip Gal on the next page). Amongst the available statins, only atorvastatin and rosuvastatin can provide high-intensity LDL lowering (i.e., ≥ 50% reduction from baseline).

DETERMINING STATIN TREATMENT INTENSITY BASED ON PATIENT RISK

STATIN BENEFIT GROUPS	PATIENT CRITERIA	STATIN TREATMENT
Secondary Prevention		
Clinical ASCVD	Includes CHD*, stroke/TIA or peripheral arterial disease thought to be of atherosclerotic origin	High-intensity**
Primary Prevention		
Primary severe dyslipidemia	Baseline LDL ≥ 190 mg/dL	High-intensity**
Diabetes and age 40-75 years	Multiple ASCVD risk factors	High-intensity**
	Regardless of 10-year ASCVD risk	Moderate-intensity
Age 40-75 years with LDL between 70-189 mg/dL	10-year ASCVD risk ≥ 20%	High-intensity**
	10-year ASCVD risk 7.5-19.9% + risk-enhancing factors	Moderate-intensity

**CHD = coronary heart disease, which includes a history of acute coronary syndrome (e.g., MI), stable angina, coronary or other arterial revascularization.*
***Consider moderate-intensity statin if not a candidate for high-intensity or patient > 75 years with LDL 70-189 mg/dL.*

STATIN TREATMENT INTENSITY DEFINITIONS AND SELECTION OPTIONS

	ATORVASTATIN	ROSUVASTATIN	SIMVASTATIN	PRAVASTATIN	LOVASTATIN	FLUVASTATIN	PITAVASTATIN
HIGH	40-80	20-40					
MODERATE	10-20	5-10	20-40	40-80	40-80	40 BID/80 XL	1-4
LOW			10	10-20	20	20-40	

High-intensity: ↓ LDL ≥ 50%; Moderate-intensity: ↓ LDL 30-49%; Low-intensity: ↓ LDL < 30%
Doses are in milligrams.

STATIN EQUIVALENT DOSES

Equivalent doses (see Study Tip Gal) are used to change one statin to another. This might be needed in the case of drug escalation (to high-intensity dosing), drug interactions, intolerance or cost (see Case Scenario).

STATIN EQUIVALENT DOSES

Pitavastatin 2 mg
Rosuvastatin 5 mg
Atorvastatin 10 mg
Simvastatin 20 mg
Lovastatin 40 mg
Pravastatin 40 mg
Fluvastatin 80 mg

Remember:
Pharmacists **R**ock
At Saving **L**ives and
Preventing **F**atty deposits

CASE SCENARIO

TM, a 57-year-old male with dyslipidemia, is currently taking simvastatin 40 mg daily. His provider would like to switch to an equivalent atorvastatin dose.

Calculate the equivalent dose of atorvastatin:

$$\frac{\text{Atorvastatin 10 mg}}{\text{Simvastatin 20 mg}} = \frac{\text{Atorvastatin X mg}}{\text{Simvastatin 40 mg}} \quad X = 20 \text{ mg}$$

A fasting lipid panel is drawn before TM leaves the provider's office. The LDL is 195 mg/dL. The provider calls the pharmacy to change to a high-intensity statin.

To change from moderate-intensity to high-intensity: Increase the atorvastatin dose to 40 mg or 80 mg daily. Or, change to rosuvastatin 20 mg or 40 mg daily.

STATINS

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Atorvastatin ***(Lipitor,*** *Atorvaliq)* Tablet, suspension + amlodipine *(Caduet)*	10-80 mg daily	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Breastfeeding, liver disease (including unexplained ↑ LFTs), concurrent use of strong CYP3A4 inhibitors (with simvastatin and lovastatin), concurrent use of cyclosporine (with pitavastatin) **WARNINGS** Muscle damage: myopathy/rhabdomyolysis with ↑ CPK ± acute renal failure; higher risk with higher doses (e.g., simvastatin 80 mg), advanced age, concurrent use of niacin, fibrates (e.g., gemfibrozil), uncontrolled hypothyroidism, renal impairment Do not use during pregnancy for most patients; can consider continuing statin for individuals at high risk for cardiovascular events Diabetes: ↑ A1C/fasting blood glucose; statin benefit outweighs risk Hepatotoxicity with ↑ LFTs (rare) Rosuvastatin: proteinuria, hematuria – usually transient Atorvastatin: hemorrhagic stroke (if recent stroke/TIA); statin benefit outweighs risk **SIDE EFFECTS** Myalgia/myopathy **MONITORING** Lipid panel (TC, LDL, HDL, TG) at baseline, 4-12 weeks after starting or adjusting treatment, then every 3-12 months (usually annually) LFTs at baseline and if symptoms of hepatotoxicity (abdominal pain, jaundice) Myalgia/myopathy/rhabdomyolysis: check CPK if symptoms of muscle damage and SCr/BUN if decreased urine output **NOTES** Can take atorvastatin, *Lescol XL*, pitavastatin, pravastatin and rosuvastatin at any time of day Atorvastatin does not require renal dose adjustments For CrCl < 30 mL/min, use ↓ starting doses of lovastatin, pravastatin, rosuvastatin and simvastatin For eGFR < 60 mL/min/1.73 m^2, use ↓ starting dose of pitavastatin **LIPID EFFECTS** ↓ LDL ~20-55%, ↑ HDL ~5-15%, ↓ TG ~10-30%
Fluvastatin *(Lescol XL)*	20-80 mg daily Immediate release: take in the evening *Lescol XL:* take daily	
Lovastatin ***(Altoprev)***	20-80 mg daily Immediate release: take with the evening meal *Altoprev* (extended release): take at bedtime	
Pitavastatin *(Livalo, Zypitamag)*	1-4 mg daily	
Pravastatin	10-80 mg daily	
Rosuvastatin ***(Crestor)***	5-40 mg daily May need to use lower doses in Asian patients – exposures are 2 times higher	
Simvastatin ***(Zocor,*** *FloLipid)* Tablet, suspension + ezetimibe *(Vytorin)*	10-40 mg daily in the evening Do not use 80 mg dose (↑ risk of myopathy)	

STATIN DRUG INTERACTIONS

Drug interactions with statins increase the risk of adverse effects (e.g., muscle damage). Significant interactions are listed in the box on the next page. Most interactions are CYP enzyme mediated, with CYP3A4 being most common. Atorvastatin, lovastatin and simvastatin are CYP3A4 substrates. In general, rosuvastatin and pravastatin have less drug interactions.

Fibrates (especially gemfibrozil) and niacin can ↑ the risk of myopathy and rhabdomyolysis. Do not use statins with gemfibrozil.

Amlodipine, a dihydropyridine calcium channel blocker, can ↑ the concentration of atorvastatin, lovastatin and simvastatin. Lovastatin and simvastatin max daily doses should be limited to 20 mg/day if used concurrently with amlodipine.

SIGNIFICANT DRUG INTERACTIONS

	Remember G ♥ PACMAN*	MAX DAILY DOSE
Do not use with simvastatin or lovastatin	**G**rapefruit ♥ **P**rotease inhibitors **A**zole antifungals **C**yclosporine, cobicistat **M**acrolides (except azithromycin)	Rosuvastatin 5 mg/day max (cyclosporine only) Atorvastatin 20 mg/day max (cobicistat only)
	Amiodarone	Simvastatin 20 mg/day max Lovastatin 40 mg/day max
	Non-DHP CCBs	Simvastatin 10 mg/day max** Lovastatin 20 mg/day max**

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*See the Drug Interactions chapter.
**With amlodipine (a DHP CCB), max daily dose is 20 mg

MUSCLE DAMAGE FROM STATINS

Muscle damage is the most common adverse effect of statins. This typically presents as muscle soreness, tiredness or weakness that is symmetrical (on both sides of the body) in large muscle groups (e.g., legs, back, arms). Symptoms usually occur within six weeks of starting treatment, but can develop at any time. These muscle effects can present with varying severity, such as:

- Myalgia: muscle soreness and tenderness
- Myopathy: muscle weakness ± CPK elevations
- Myositis: muscle inflammation
- Rhabdomyolysis: muscle symptoms with a very high CPK (> 10,000 IU/L) plus muscle protein in the urine (myoglobinuria), which can lead to acute renal failure

Coenzyme Q10 may provide benefit for mild muscle symptoms but is not routinely recommended (due to limited evidence). The primary management includes holding the statin and rechallenging once symptoms resolve (see Study Tip Gal).

MANAGING MYALGIA

REDUCE THE RISK

Avoid drug interactions (e.g., do not use gemfibrozil + statin).

Do not use simvastatin 80 mg/day.

IF MYALGIA OCCURS

Hold statin, check CPK, investigate other possible causes.

After 2-4 weeks: re-challenge with the same statin at the same or a ↓ dose.

If myalgia returns, discontinue the statin. Once muscle symptoms resolve, use a low dose of a different statin; gradually ↑ dose.

If the patient is unable to tolerate a statin after at least two attempts, non-statin treatment may be considered.

NON-STATIN TREATMENTS

Non-statin treatment may be warranted in patients who experience statin-associated adverse effects after multiple trials of a statin or when additional LDL-lowering is required (i.e., add-on to a maximized statin dose).

In patients with clinical ASCVD and/or a baseline LDL ≥ 190 mg/dL, ezetimibe and/or PCSK9 mAbs are recommended as initial non-statin therapies. Ezetimibe may be preferred, if LDL goals can be achieved (e.g., < 25% additional LDL lowering needed), because of cost and oral administration. PCSK9 mAbs are injectable and more expensive; the primary reason to choose a PCSK9 mAb over ezetimibe is if significant (e.g., > 25%) LDL lowering is needed. Bempedoic acid and inclisiran are second-line non-statin therapies.

In patients without ASCVD and with a baseline LDL 70-189 mg/dL, ezetimibe is preferred. Bempedoic acid and bile acid sequestrants are alternatives to ezetimibe.

In select populations, fish oils and fibrates are used to target high triglycerides. Icosapent ethyl (a fish oil) is also recommended for ASCVD reduction in select patients.

DETERMINING NEED FOR ADD-ON TREATMENT

PATIENT CRITERIA	LDL THRESHOLD TO ADD NON-STATIN THERAPY	PREFERRED TREATMENT
Clinical ASCVD and very high risk*	≥ 55 mg/dL**	Ezetimibe and/or PCSK9 mAb
Clinical ASCVD not at very high risk* Clinical ASCVD and baseline LDL ≥ 190 mg/dL	≥ 70 mg/dL	Ezetimibe and/or PCSK9 mAb
No clinical ASCVD with diabetes and/or 10-year ASCVD risk ≥ 20%	≥ 70 mg/dL	Ezetimibe
No clinical ASCVD with baseline LDL ≥ 190 mg/dL	≥ 100 mg/dL	Ezetimibe and/or PCSK9 mAb

**History of multiple ASCVD events or one ASCVD event and multiple high-risk conditions (e.g., diabetes, hypertension, age ≥ 65 years, chronic kidney disease, smoking).*
***AACE guidelines recommend a threshold of 70 mg/dL based on limited evidence for this lower target.*

EZETIMIBE

Ezetimibe inhibits absorption of cholesterol in the small intestine.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Ezetimibe *(Zetia)* + simvastatin *(Vytorin)* + bempedoic acid *(Nexlizet)*	10 mg daily eGFR < 60 mL/min/1.73 m^2: do not exceed simvastatin 20 mg/day when using combination product *(Vytorin)*	**WARNINGS** Avoid use in moderate or severe hepatic impairment Skeletal muscle effects (e.g., myopathy), ↑ risk with a statin Pregnancy: risks to fetus unknown (individualize therapy based on potential risk vs. benefit) Breastfeeding: generally not recommended **SIDE EFFECTS** Myalgia, arthralgia, pain in extremities, diarrhea, URTIs, sinusitis **MONITORING** LFTs at baseline and as clinically indicated thereafter **LIPID EFFECTS (Ezetimibe Monotherapy)** ↓ LDL 18-23%, ↑ HDL 1-3%, ↓ TG 5-10%

EZETIMIBE DRUG INTERACTIONS

- When used together, both ezetimibe and cyclosporine concentrations can ↑; monitor cyclosporine levels.
- Concurrent bile acid sequestrants ↓ ezetimibe; give ezetimibe two hours before or four hours after.
- Can ↑ risk of cholelithiasis when used with fenofibrate or gemfibrozil. Do not use with gemfibrozil.

PROPROTEIN CONVERTASE SUBTILISIN/KEXIN TYPE 9 MONOCLONAL ANTIBODIES

The LDL receptor clears circulating LDL. Proprotein convertase subtilisin/kexin type 9 (PCSK9) is an enzyme that degrades LDL receptors. PCSK9 monoclonal antibodies block the ability of PCSK9 to bind to the LDL receptor. They dramatically ↓ LDL cholesterol and reduce the risk of cardiovascular events. PCSK9 mAbs are indicated in patients with established ASCVD or familial hypercholesterolemia.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Alirocumab ***(Praluent)*** Prefilled syringe/pen	75-150 mg SC once every 2 weeks or 300 mg once monthly	**WARNINGS** Allergic reactions **SIDE EFFECTS** Injection site reactions, nasopharyngitis, influenza, URTIs, UTI, back pain (evolocumab), ↑ LFTs (alirocumab) **MONITORING** LDL at baseline and at 4-8 weeks to assess response **NOTES** Store in the refrigerator in the original carton to protect from light; can keep at room temperature for up to 30 days, then must be discarded. Allow to warm to room temperature prior to administration. Alirocumab is available in 75 mg and 150 mg package sizes; a 300 mg once monthly dose requires two 150 mg injections **LIPID EFFECTS** ↓ LDL ~60%, ↓ non-HDL ~35%, ↓ apoB ~50%, ↓ TC ~36%
Evolocumab ***(Repatha****, Repatha SureClick, Pushtronex)* Prefilled syringe/pen/ cartridge	140 mg SC once every 2 weeks or 420 mg once monthly	

INCLISIRAN

Inclisiran inhibits intracellular PCSK9 production, which results in increased activity of the LDL receptor. Inclisiran should not be used concurrently with a PCSK9 mAb due to overlapping mechanisms. Inclisiran is indicated for HeFH in combination with a statin (add-on treatment).

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Inclisiran *(Leqvio)* Prefilled syringe	284 mg SC followed by 284 mg 3 months later and then 284 mg every 6 months thereafter	**SIDE EFFECTS** Injection site reactions, arthralgias, bronchitis, hypersensitivity reactions (including angioedema) **MONITORING** LDL at baseline, 4-12 weeks after to assess response, then every 3-12 months thereafter **NOTES** Must be administered by a healthcare provider **LIPID EFFECTS** ↓ LDL ~50% when added to a statin

BEMPEDOIC ACID

Bempedoic acid inhibits cholesterol synthesis in the liver by inhibiting adenosine triphosphate-citrate lyase (ACL), an enzyme upstream of HMG-CoA reductase in the cholesterol synthesis pathway. Bempedoic acid is indicated for prevention of ASCVD (primary or secondary) or HeFH.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Bempedoic Acid *(Nexletol)* + ezetimibe *(Nexlizet)* Tablet	180 mg PO once daily	**SIDE EFFECTS** ↑ UA (and gout), tendon rupture **MONITORING** LDL within 8-12 weeks of initiation **LIPID EFFECTS** ↓ LDL ~18% when added to a statin

BEMPEDOIC ACID DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Avoid concurrent use with simvastatin > 20 mg and pravastatin > 40 mg to decrease risk of myopathy.

BILE ACID SEQUESTRANTS/BILE ACID BINDING RESINS

These drugs bind bile acids in the intestine, forming a complex that is excreted in the feces. This non-systemic action results in partial removal of bile acids (and therefore cholesterol) from enterohepatic circulation, preventing their reabsorption.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Colesevelam ***(Welchol)*** Tablet, granule packet Also approved for type 2 diabetes (↓ A1C ~0.5%)	3.75 grams daily or in divided doses with a meal and liquid	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Colesevelam: bowel obstruction, TG > 500 mg/dL, history of hypertriglyceridemia-induced pancreatitis Cholestyramine: complete biliary obstruction **WARNINGS** Some formulations contain phenylalanine and should not be used in patients with PKU ↑ bleeding tendency due to vitamin K deficiency **SIDE EFFECTS** Constipation (↓ dose or use laxative), abdominal pain, bloating, cramping, gas, ↑ TG, dyspepsia, nausea, esophageal obstruction **NOTES** Not recommended when TG are ≥ 300 mg/dL Colesevelam is a treatment option for pregnant patients Cholestyramine packet: holding the resin suspension in the mouth for prolonged periods may cause tooth discoloration, enamel erosion or decay; use good oral hygiene **LIPID EFFECTS** ↓ LDL ~10-30%, ↑ HDL ~3-5%, no change or ↑ TG ~5%
Cholestyramine *(Prevalite)* Powder packet Also approved for pruritus due to ↑ levels of bile acids	Initial: 4 grams daily or BID Maintenance: 8-16 grams/day divided BID with meals	
Colestipol *(Colestid)* Tablet, packet, granules	Tablets: 2 grams daily or BID Packet and granules: 5 grams daily or BID	

BILE ACID SEQUESTRANTS DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Bile acid sequestrants have multiple binding interactions. Colesevelam has fewer drug interactions than cholestyramine and colestipol and is more commonly used.
  - Cholestyramine or colestipol: take all other drugs at least 1 – 4 hours before or 4 – 6 hours after doses.
  - Colesevelam: take select drugs (e.g., cyclosporine, sulfonylureas, levothyroxine, olmesartan, phenytoin and oral contraceptives with ethinyl estradiol and norethindrone) 4 hours prior to colesevelam.
- All bile acid sequestrants can ↓ absorption of fat-soluble vitamins (A, D, E, K), folate and iron.
  - Monitor INR more frequently in patients taking warfarin (due to affected vitamin K absorption).
  - A multivitamin may be needed but separate administration from the bile acid sequestrant.
- Colesevelam can ↑ levels of metformin ER.

FIBRATES

Fibrates are peroxisome proliferator-activated receptor alpha (PPARα) agonists, which upregulate the expression of apolipoprotein C2 (apoC-II) and apolipoprotein A1 (apoA-I). ApoC-II increases lipoprotein lipase activity leading to increased catabolism of VLDL particles. This decreases TG significantly, but can lead to increased LDL in the setting of very high TG.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Fenofibrate, Fenofibric Acid ***(Tricor*, Trilipix, Lipofen)***	Fenofibrate (micronized): 43-130 mg/day *Tricor:* 48-145 mg/day *Trilipix:* 45-135 mg/day *Lipofen:* 50-150 mg/day with meals	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Severe liver disease, including primary biliary cirrhosis, severe renal disease (CrCl ≤ 30 mL/min), gallbladder disease, breastfeeding, concurrent use with repaglinide or simvastatin (gemfibrozil only) **WARNINGS** Myopathy, ↑ risk when coadministered with a statin (particularly in older adults, diabetes, renal failure, hypothyroidism); cholelithiasis, reversible ↑ SCr (> 2 mg/dL) **SIDE EFFECTS** Dyspepsia (gemfibrozil), ↑ LFTs (dose-related), abdominal pain, ↑ CPK, URTIs **MONITORING** LFTs, renal function **NOTES** Reduce dose if CrCl 31-80 mL/min (fenofibrates) **LIPID EFFECTS** ↓ TG ~20-50%, ↑ HDL ~15%, ↓ LDL ~5-20% (can ↑ LDL when TG are high)
Gemfibrozil ***(Lopid)***	600 mg BID, 30 minutes before breakfast and dinner	

**Brand discontinued but name still used in practice.*

FIBRATE DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Fibrates (especially gemfibrozil) can ↑ the risk of myopathy and rhabdomyolysis. Gemfibrozil should not be used with ezetimibe or statins.
- Colchicine can ↑ the risk of myopathy when coadministered with fenofibrate.
- Gemfibrozil is contraindicated with repaglinide as it can ↑ hypoglycemic effects.
- Fibrates can ↑ the effects of sulfonylureas and warfarin.

NIACIN

Niacin is also known as nicotinic acid or vitamin B3, although doses for cholesterol reduction are much higher than doses found in multivitamin products. While niacin increases HDL and decreases TG and LDL, it has not been shown to decrease cardiovascular risk and often has poor tolerability. Niacin is therefore not recommended except in specific clinical situations (e.g., triglyceride levels > 500 mg/dL).

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Niacin Immediate-release (IR) (crystalline): *Niacor* Extended-release (ER) Controlled-release (CR)/sustained-release (SR): *Slo-Niacin,* OTC Formulations of niacin are not interchangeable	Titrate slowly IR: 250-3,000 mg in 3 divided doses with food ER: 500-2,000 mg at bedtime after a low-fat snack CR/SR: 250-750 mg daily with food	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Active liver disease, active peptic ulcer disease or arterial bleeding **WARNINGS** Rhabdomyolysis with doses ≥ 1 gram/day and combined with statin Hepatotoxicity ↑ BG, ↑ uric acid, ↓ phosphate Use caution with unstable angina or during the acute phase of an MI **SIDE EFFECTS** Flushing, pruritus (itching), vomiting, diarrhea, nausea, cough, orthostatic hypotension, ↓ platelets **MONITORING** LFTs at baseline, every 6-12 weeks for the first year and then every 6 months Blood glucose (if diabetic), uric acid (if gout history), INR (if on warfarin), lipid profile **NOTES** ER formulation is preferred due to less flushing and hepatotoxicity, but it is the most expensive To reduce flushing: take aspirin 325 mg (or ibuprofen 200 mg) 30-60 minutes before the dose; take with food, but avoid spicy food, alcohol and hot beverages (which can worsen flushing) Flush-free niacins (inositol hexaniacinate or hexanicotinate), niacinamide or nicotinamide are not effective **LIPID EFFECTS** ↓ LDL 5-25%, ↑ HDL 15-35%, ↓ TG 20-50%

NIACIN DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Take niacin 4 – 6 hours after bile acid sequestrants.

FISH OILS

Fish oils are also known as omega-3 fatty acids. Their mechanism is not completely understood; they may reduce hepatic synthesis of TG. Fish oils are indicated as an adjunct to diet when TG ≥ 500 mg/dL. Icosapent ethyl is also recommended for ASCVD risk reduction in select patients (clinical ASCVD or type 2 diabetes with additional risk factors) when triglycerides are ≥ 150 mg/dL despite a maximally tolerated statin.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Omega-3 Acid Ethyl Esters *(Lovaza)* 1 gram capsule contains 465 mg eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and 375 mg docosahexaenoic acid (DHA)	4 capsules daily or 2 capsules BID	**WARNINGS** Use with caution in patients with hypersensitivity to fish and/or shellfish *Lovaza:* can ↑ LDL levels; may ↑ recurrences of symptomatic atrial fibrillation (AF) or flutter in patients with AF (particularly within the first months of initiation) **SIDE EFFECTS** Eructation (burping), dyspepsia, taste perversions *(Lovaza)*, arthralgia *(Vascepa)* **MONITORING** LFTs (in patients with hepatic impairment), TG, LDL **NOTES** Many OTC omega-3 fatty acid products are marketed as dietary supplements; only the prescription medications *Lovaza* and *Vascepa* are FDA-approved for TG lowering Stop prior to elective surgeries due to increased risk of bleeding **LIPID EFFECTS** ↓ TG up to 45%, ↑ HDL ~9%, can ↑ LDL (up to 44% with *Lovaza*, no ↑ with *Vascepa*)
Icosapent Ethyl *(Vascepa)* Contains 0.5 or 1 gram of icosapent ethyl, an ethyl ester of EPA	2 grams BID with food	

FISH OIL DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Omega-3-fatty acids can prolong bleeding time; use caution when combined with other medications that can ↑ bleeding risk (e.g., antiplatelets, anticoagulants). Monitor INR in patients taking warfarin.

OTHER DRUGS

The drugs in the table below have more niche uses.

DRUG CLASS	COMMENTS
Lomitapide *(Juxtapid)* Capsule	MOA: prevents assembly of apoB-containing lipoproteins (LDL and VLDL) by inhibiting microsomal triglyceride transfer protein. Approved as an adjunct treatment for HoFH. Due to the risk of hepatotoxicity (a boxed warning), it is only available through the *Juxtapid* Risk Evaluation and Mitigation Strategy (REMS) program. Contraindications: active liver disease, pregnancy, concomitant use with moderate-strong CYP3A4 inhibitors.
Evinacumab *(Evkeeza)* IV infusion	MOA: monoclonal antibody that inhibits angiopoietin-like 3 (ANGPLT3), resulting in increased lipid metabolism; decreases LDL, HDL and TGs. Approved as an adjunct treatment for HoFH. Significant adverse effects: severe hypersensitivity reactions, including anaphylaxis.

KEY COUNSELING POINTS

See the Drug Formulations and Patient Counseling chapter for counseling language/layman's terminology. See Drug Interactions section for each drug class.

ALL CHOLESTEROL MEDICATIONS

- Follow lifestyle recommendations, including heart-healthy eating habits and exercise.

STATINS

- Take simvastatin and fluvastatin IR in the evening (if taken once daily), lovastatin IR with the evening meal and lovastatin ER at bedtime. Other statins can be taken at any time of the day.
- Can cause muscle damage and liver damage.
- Avoid grapefruit.
- Avoid in pregnancy (teratogenic) in most cases.

EZETIMIBE

- Can cause muscle damage and liver damage.

PCSK9 MONOCLONAL ANTIBODIES

- Inject subcutaneously into the thigh, abdomen or upper arm.
- Can cause:
  - ☐ Allergy/anaphylaxis.
  - ☐ Injection site reaction.
- Store in the refrigerator. Allow to warm to room temperature before injecting. Can be kept at room temperature for 30 days.

BILE ACID SEQUESTRANTS

- Take at mealtimes with plenty of water or other liquid.
- Can cause constipation.
- Reduces vitamin A, D, E and K absorption.

FIBRATES

- Gemfibrozil: take twice daily, 30 minutes before breakfast and dinner.
- Can cause:
  - ☐ Muscle damage.
  - ☐ Liver damage.
  - ☐ Cholelithiasis (gallstones); contact prescriber for severe abdominal pain, nausea or vomiting.

NIACIN

- ER: take at bedtime after a low-fat snack.
- Other niacins: take with food.
- Can cause:
  - ☐ Hyperglycemia.
  - ☐ Liver damage.
  - ☐ Flushing (warmth, redness, itching and/or tingling of the skin).
- To reduce flushing, take aspirin 325 mg (or ibuprofen 200 mg) 30 – 60 minutes before the dose. Taking with food and avoiding alcohol, hot beverages or spicy foods can reduce flushing.

FISH OIL

- *Vascepa:* take with food.
- Can cause dyspepsia (all fish oils), abnormal sense of taste *(Lovaza)* or joint pain *(Vascepa)*.

Select Guidelines/References

2018 AHA/ACC/AACVPR/AAPA/ABC/ACPM/ADA/AGS/APhA/ASPC/NLA/PCNA guideline on the management of blood cholesterol: a report of the American College of Cardiology/American Heart Association Task Force on Clinical Practice Guidelines. *Circulation*. 2018;000:e000–e000. DOI: 10.1161/CIR.0000000000000625.

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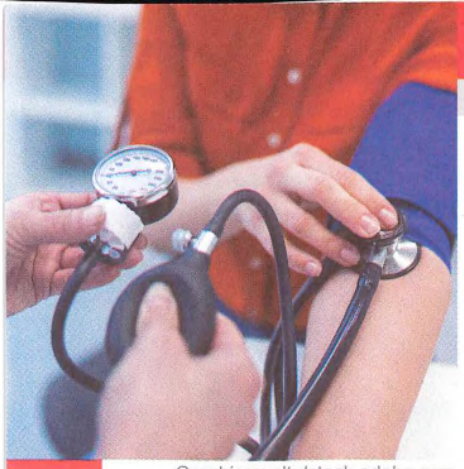

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CHAPTER 28

HYPERTENSION

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= Study Tip Gal = Key Drugs Guy

BACKGROUND

Hypertension, or high blood pressure (BP), affects nearly half of all American adults and is a common disease managed in primary care. Hypertension is mostly asymptomatic, which can delay diagnosis and contribute to medication nonadherence. Medication side effects, cost and pill burden can also lead to inappropriate discontinuation of treatment.

Uncontrolled hypertension places the patient at greater risk for heart disease, stroke and kidney disease. Pharmacists play a vital role in screening and monitoring patients and providing counseling about the importance of lifestyle management (e.g., healthy diet, sodium restriction, physical activity, smoking cessation) and medication adherence.

ETIOLOGY AND PATHOPHYSIOLOGY

Most patients (~90%) have primary (essential) hypertension. The cause is unknown, but a combination of risk factors (e.g., obesity, sedentary lifestyle, excessive salt intake, smoking, family history, diabetes, dyslipidemia) is usually present. Secondary hypertension has an identifiable underlying cause, such as renal disease, adrenal disease (e.g., excess aldosterone secretion), obstructive sleep apnea or drugs (see Key Drugs Guy).

DRUGS THAT CAN INCREASE BLOOD PRESSURE

Increased sympathomimetic activity
ADHD drugs (e.g., amphetamine)

Decongestants (e.g., pseudoephedrine, phenylephrine)

Recreational substances (e.g., cocaine, caffeine)

Antidepressants (e.g., TCAs, SNRIs, MAO inhibitors)

Increased sodium and water retention
NSAIDs

Immunosuppressants (e.g., cyclosporine)

Systemic steroids

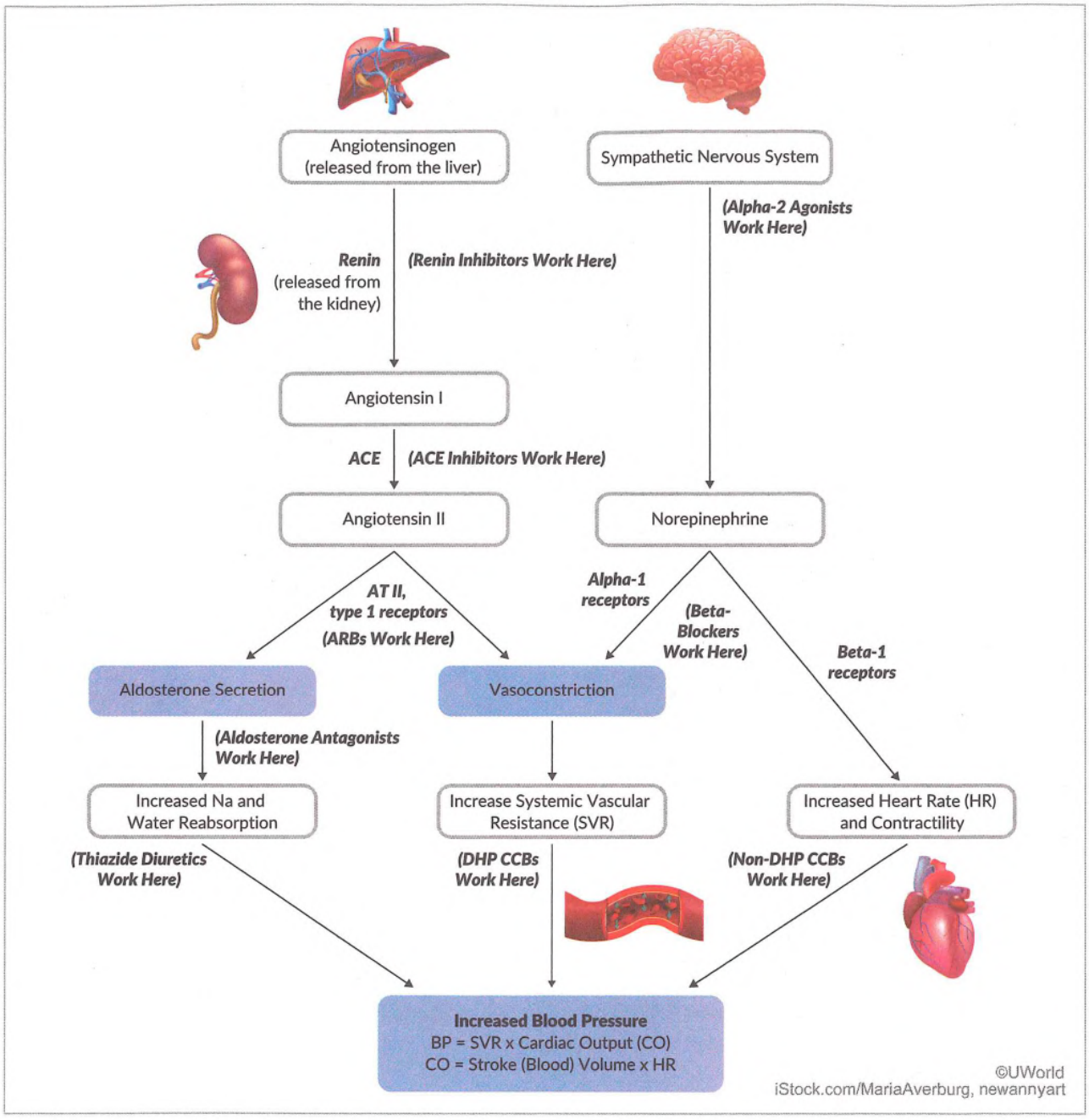
Increased blood viscosity
Erythropoiesis-stimulating agents (e.g., epoetin alfa)

Other
Oral contraceptives (with higher estrogen content)

VEGF inhibitors (e.g., bevacizumab, sunitinib)

The pathophysiology of hypertension includes activation of the sympathetic nervous system (SNS) and renin-angiotensin-aldosterone system (RAAS). The resulting increase in neurohormone levels (e.g., norepinephrine, angiotensin II, aldosterone) can increase BP. Most medications used to treat hypertension target one or both of these neurohormonal pathways (see diagram on next page).

NEUROHORMONAL PATHWAYS INVOLVED IN HYPERTENSION



SCREENING AND DIAGNOSIS

Accurate measurement of BP (see Study Tip Gal) is essential for diagnosing hypertension and assessing if medication titration is needed. BP readings in the same individual can vary during the day due to stress, exercise, medications, eating and other activities of daily living. BP usually decreases during the night and increases again in the early morning.

A hypertension diagnosis should be based on an average of at least two readings obtained on at least two separate occasions. BP readings in a clinical office setting may be falsely elevated (e.g., white coat hypertension) and lead to inaccurate clinical decisions related to patient risk and treatment. Therefore, out-of-office BP monitoring with an ambulatory BP monitor or an automated home device is preferred.

The American College of Cardiology and American Heart Association (ACC/AHA) has defined four categories of BP in adults, based on systolic BP (SBP) and/or diastolic BP (DBP) readings measured in units of millimeters of mercury (mmHg):

- Normal: SBP < 120 and DBP < 80
- Elevated: SBP 120 – 129 and DBP < 80
- Hypertension
  - Stage 1: SBP 130 – 139 or DBP 80 – 89
  - Stage 2: SBP ≥ 140 or DBP ≥ 90

BLOOD PRESSURE MONITORING

Correct use of a blood pressure monitoring device

DO	DON'T
Go to the restroom and empty the bladder	Talk
Sit in a chair (both feet on the floor with back supported) and relax for at least 5 minutes	Lie down or sit without the back supported (e.g., on an examination table)
Use the correct cuff size	Drink caffeine, exercise or smoke for 30 minutes prior
Support the arm at heart level (e.g., resting on a desk)	Use a finger monitor or wrist monitor*
Wait 1-2 minutes in between measurements	

Self-monitoring (bring device and BP reading log to clinic visits)

Ambulatory BP monitoring device: typically worn continuously (i.e., for 24 hours) during daily activities and sleep; obtains readings every 15-60 minutes.

Home BP monitoring device: patient measures and records the average of at least two readings in the morning and evening before eating or taking any medications.

**A wrist monitor is not ideal but may be necessary in select cases (e.g., appropriate cuff size is unavailable for an obese patient).*

LIFESTYLE MANAGEMENT

Lifestyle interventions are an essential component of hypertension prevention (in patients with normal or elevated BP) and treatment. Interventions proven to lower BP include:

- Weight loss (1 kg of weight loss decreases BP by ~1 mmHg)
- A heart-healthy diet [e.g., DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension)] that is high in fruits, vegetables, fiber and low-fat dairy products, and low in saturated fats and sugar
- Adequate dietary potassium intake or supplementation, unless contraindicated (e.g., chronic kidney disease)
- Reduced sodium intake (< 1,500 mg daily)
- Routine physical activity
- Limited alcohol consumption (≤ 1 drink daily for women and ≤ 2 drinks daily for men)

Additional modifications to improve overall cardiovascular health, including tobacco cessation and adequate control of blood glucose and cholesterol, are also recommended.

NATURAL PRODUCTS

Although not recommended by the guidelines due to limited evidence for reducing BP, some patients may supplement drug treatment with natural medicines, such as garlic and fish oil. Patients should be advised that both of these can increase bleeding risk.

TREATMENT PRINCIPLES (ACC/AHA)

- Emphasize lifestyle modifications.
- Drug treatment initiation is based on hypertension stage. An atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease (ASCVD) risk score may also be needed and can be assessed using an online tool (tools.acc.org/ASCVD-Risk-Estimator).
  - ☐ See Study Tip Gal for details, including initial drug selection, BP goal and monitoring.
- Once-daily regimens and/or combination products (see table on next page) are preferred for medication adherence.
  - ☐ Most patients will require two or more drugs.
  - ☐ Medications from the four preferred drug classes should be selected first before considering alternative classes.
  - ☐ Do not use an ACE inhibitor and ARB together.
- When titrating medications, adding a second drug before reaching the maximum dose of the first medication can be more effective and cause fewer side effects.
- Patients with hypertension and select comorbid conditions (e.g., heart failure) should be treated according to the specific disease-state guideline recommendations. Refer to individual course book chapters as appropriate.

HYPERTENSION GUIDELINE RECOMMENDATIONS

WHEN TO START TREATMENT

- Stage 1 HTN (SBP 130-139 mmHg or DBP 80-89 mmHg) and any of the following:
  - ☐ Clinical CVD (stroke, heart failure or coronary heart disease)
  - ☐ 10-year ASCVD risk ≥ 10%
  - ☐ Does not meet BP goal after 6 months of lifestyle modifications
- Stage 2 HTN (SBP ≥ 140 mmHg or DBP ≥ 90 mmHg)

BP GOAL

- < 130/80 mmHg*

INITIAL DRUG SELECTION

- Use a drug from one of the preferred classes:
  - ☐ Thiazide diuretic**
  - ☐ Dihydropyridine calcium channel blocker (DHP CCB)**
  - ☐ Angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitor or angiotensin receptor blocker (ARB)
- CKD***: ACE inhibitor or ARB
- Start two drugs from the preferred classes when baseline average BP is > 20/10 mmHg above goal (e.g., > 150/90 mmHg)

MONITORING

- Check BP every month and titrate drug if not at goal

**The KDIGO 2021 Blood Pressure in CKD Guideline recommends a goal SBP < 120 mmHg (if tolerated) for patients with hypertension and CKD (see Renal Disease chapter).*

***May be preferred in self-identified Black patients without CKD.*

****Stage 3 CKD (eGFR < 60 mL/min/1.73 m^2) or albuminuria (for exam purposes, defined as urine albumin ≥ 30 mg/day or albumin:creatinine ratio ≥ 30 mg/g).*

SELECT COMBINATION BLOOD PRESSURE DRUGS

Tip: the brand names of many diuretic combinations end in HCT or -etic

ACE INHIBITOR OR ARB + DIURETIC

Lisinopril/Hydrochlorothiazide *(Zestoretic)*

Losartan/Hydrochlorothiazide *(Hyzaar)*

Olmesartan/Hydrochlorothiazide *(Benicar HCT)*

Valsartan/Hydrochlorothiazide *(Diovan HCT)*

Benazepril/Hydrochlorothiazide *(Lotensin HCT)*

Candesartan/Hydrochlorothiazide *(Atacand HCT)*

Enalapril/Hydrochlorothiazide *(Vaseretic)*

ACE INHIBITOR OR ARB + CCB

Benazepril/Amlodipine *(Lotrel)*

Valsartan/Amlodipine *(Exforge)*

BETA BLOCKER + DIURETIC

Atenolol/Chlorthalidone *(Tenoretic)*

Bisoprolol/Hydrochlorothiazide *(Ziac)*

K-SPARING + THIAZIDE DIURETIC

Triamterene/Hydrochlorothiazide *(Maxzide, Maxzide-25)*

Amiloride/Hydrochlorothiazide

Spironolactone/Hydrochlorothiazide *(Aldactazide)*

TRIPLE COMBINATIONS

Olmesartan/Amlodipine/Hydrochlorothiazide *(Tribenzor)*

Valsartan/Amlodipine/Hydrochlorothiazide *(Exforge HCT)*

PREGNANCY AND HYPERTENSION

ACE inhibitors, ARBs and the direct renin inhibitor (aliskiren) have a boxed warning for fetal toxicity. These agents should be discontinued immediately if pregnancy is planned or detected.

Recommended first-line treatments for non-severe chronic hypertension (hypertension diagnosed before pregnancy or before 20 weeks gestation) include labetalol, nifedipine extended-release and methyldopa. The BP threshold for drug treatment initiation is the same as non-pregnant adults (SBP ≥ 140 mmHg or DBP ≥ 90 mmHg) but the BP goal is less stringent (SBP 120 – 139 mmHg and DBP 80 – 89 mmHg).

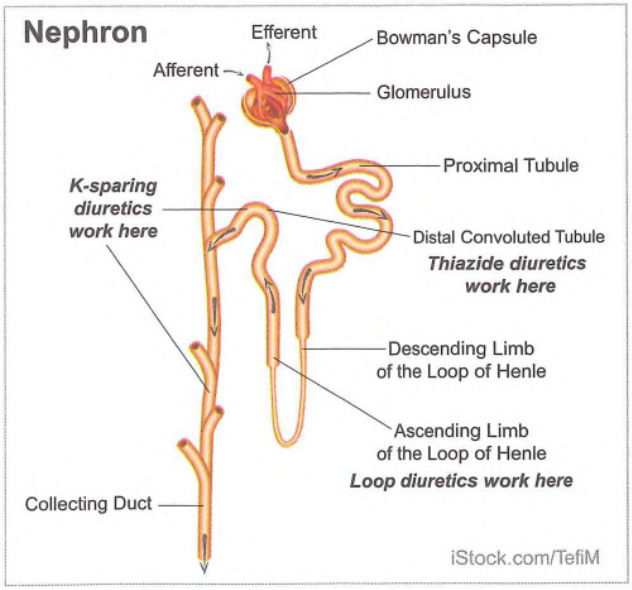
Other hypertensive disorders of pregnancy include gestational hypertension and preeclampsia, which are both new-onset hypertension occurring after 20 weeks gestation. Preeclampsia is further characterized by the presence of proteinuria or significant end-organ dysfunction.

These conditions can be treated with the aforementioned oral drugs, however the use of intravenous antihypertensives (e.g., labetalol, hydralazine) may be required for severe presentations. Additionally, in patients at high risk for preeclampsia (e.g., pre-existing hypertension, renal disease, diabetes, previous preeclampsia), daily low-dose aspirin is recommended after the first trimester.

THIAZIDE DIURETICS

Thiazide diuretics are inexpensive, effective and have mild side effects in most patients. They are one of four preferred drug classes that can be considered for initial hypertension treatment. Loop diuretics are used primarily in heart failure (see Chronic Heart Failure chapter).

Thiazide diuretics inhibit sodium reabsorption in the distal convoluted tubule (see Nephron diagram), causing increased excretion of sodium and water (which ↓ preload and BP) as well as potassium, magnesium and chloride.



DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Chlorthalidone Tablet	12.5-25 mg daily	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Hypersensitivity to sulfonamide-derived drugs (not likely to cross-react, see Drug Allergies & Adverse Drug Reactions chapter); anuria **WARNINGS** Severe renal disease (can precipitate azotemia), progressive liver disease (fluid and electrolyte changes can precipitate hepatic coma), transient myopia or acute angle-closure glaucoma, can precipitate or exacerbate conditions such as systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE), gout, dyslipidemia and diabetes **SIDE EFFECTS** ↓ electrolytes: Na, K, Mg, Cl ↑ electrolytes/labs: Ca, UA, LDL, TG, BG Photosensitivity (including a small ↑ risk of non-melanoma skin cancer), impotence, dizziness, rash **MONITORING** Electrolytes, renal function, BP, fluid status (weight, input and output), BG (in diabetes) **NOTES** Thiazide diuretic effect is diminished when CrCl < 30 mL/min (except metolazone, which is indicated for volume overload in combination with a loop diuretic) Take early in the day to avoid nocturia Chlorothiazide is the only thiazide diuretic available IV Chlorthalidone is considered more effective at lowering BP due to a longer duration of action and increased potency Hypokalemia can be avoided with regular intake of potassium-rich foods, potassium supplements or concurrent use of a potassium-sparing diuretic
Hydrochlorothiazide Tablet, capsule	12.5-50 mg daily	
Chlorothiazide (Diuril) Oral suspension, injection	500-2,000 mg daily in 1-2 divided doses	
Indapamide Tablet	1.25-2.5 mg daily	
Metolazone Tablet	2.5-5 mg daily	

THIAZIDE DIURETIC DRUG INTERACTIONS

- All antihypertensives, including thiazide diuretics, can enhance the BP-lowering effects of other drugs; carefully monitor BP when using combinations of medications with antihypertensive effects.
- Drugs that can cause sodium and water retention (e.g., NSAIDs) can decrease thiazide diuretic effectiveness; monitor BP closely if used in combination. If possible, avoid NSAIDs in patients with cardiovascular disease.
- Thiazide diuretics can ↓ lithium renal clearance and ↑ risk of lithium toxicity. Consider decreasing the lithium dose if a thiazide diuretic is initiated and monitor lithium levels closely during concurrent treatment.
- Thiazide diuretics can ↑ dofetilide concentrations, leading to an ↑ risk of QT prolongation; do not use in combination.

CALCIUM CHANNEL BLOCKERS

There are two types of calcium channel blockers (CCBs), dihydropyridine (DHP) and non-dihydropyridine (non-DHP). They inhibit Ca ions from entering vascular smooth muscle and myocardial cells.

- DHP CCBs are more selective for vascular smooth muscle; this causes peripheral arterial vasodilation (which ↓ SVR and BP) and coronary artery vasodilation.
- Non-DHP CCBs are more selective for the myocardium, making them less potent vasodilators. The decrease in BP produced by non-DHP CCBs is due to negative inotropic (↓ force of ventricular contraction) and negative chronotropic (↓ HR) effects.

Select drugs (e.g., nifedipine, diltiazem, verapamil) have multiple long-acting formulations, but not all generic products are therapeutically equivalent (consult the *Orange Book* to identify an AB-rated generic).

DIHYDROPYRIDINE CCBs

DHP CCBs have generic names that end in "-pine"; they are used for hypertension, chronic stable and vasospastic angina (see Stable Angina chapter) and Raynaud's phenomenon (cold/blue fingers secondary to peripheral vasoconstriction).

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Amlodipine *(Norvasc, Katerzia, Norliqva)* Tablet, oral suspension, oral solution	2.5-10 mg daily	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Nicardipine should not be used in advanced aortic stenosis **WARNINGS** Hypotension (especially with severe aortic stenosis), worsening angina and/or MI, severe hepatic impairment, use caution in heart failure (see Notes) Nifedipine IR: do not use for chronic hypertension or acute BP reduction in non-pregnant adults (significant hypotension, MI and/or death has occurred) **SIDE EFFECTS** Generally well-tolerated, can cause vasodilatory effects (peripheral edema, headache, flushing, palpitations, reflex tachycardia), fatigue, nausea, gingival hyperplasia (or overgrowth) **MONITORING** Peripheral edema, BP, HR **NOTES** Amlodipine is considered safe if a DHP CCB must be used to lower BP in a patient with heart failure with reduced ejection fraction Nifedipine ER is a drug of choice in pregnancy *Procardia XL:* OROS/gel matrix formulation can leave a ghost tablet (empty shell) in the stool (see Drug Formulations and Patient Counseling chapter)
Nicardipine *(Cardene IV)* Injection, IR capsule	IV: 5 mg/hr, ↑ by 2.5 mg/hr every 5-15 min to max dose of 15 mg/hr IR: 20-40 mg TID	
Nifedipine *(Procardia XL)* ER tablet, IR capsule	ER: 30-90 mg daily	
Felodipine	2.5-10 mg daily	
Isradipine	2.5-5 mg BID	
Nisoldipine ER *(Sular)*	17-34 mg daily	
Nisoldipine ER (original formulation)	20-40 mg daily	

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Clevidipine *(Cleviprex)* Injection	1-21 mg/hr	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Allergy to soybeans, soy products or eggs; defective lipid metabolism (e.g., lipoid nephrosis, hyperlipidemia with acute pancreatitis); severe aortic stenosis **WARNINGS** Hypotension, reflex tachycardia, infections (see Notes) **SIDE EFFECTS** Hypertriglyceridemia, headache, atrial fibrillation, nausea **MONITORING** BP, HR **NOTES** A lipid emulsion (provides 2 kcal/mL); milky-white in color Use strict aseptic technique due to infection risk; maximum time of use after vial puncture is 12 hrs

CASE SCENARIO

TW is a 54-year-old female admitted to the medical ICU with a hypertensive emergency. She is receiving clevidipine 50 mg/100 mL at a rate of 3 mg/hr. The 100 mL bottle has 52 mL remaining at 1400.

- **How many calories per day is TW receiving from clevidipine?**
  Calculate using the flow rate, product concentration and known kcal/mL provided.

$$\frac{3\text{ mg}}{\text{hr}} \times \frac{24\text{ hrs}}{\text{day}} \times \frac{100\text{ mL}}{50\text{ mg}} \times \frac{2\text{ kcal}}{\text{mL}} = 288\text{ kcal/day}$$

- **At what time should the bottle of clevidipine be removed and replaced?**
  48 mL of clevidipine have been used. First, calculate how long the bottle has been hanging.

$$48\text{ mL} \times \frac{50\text{ mg}}{100\text{ mL}} \times \frac{1\text{ hr}}{3\text{ mg}} = 8\text{ hrs}$$

  The bottle needs to be replaced every 12 hours (or in 4 more hours). It is currently 1400. A new bottle should be hung at 1800.

- **What other drugs may require similar calculations?**
  Propofol is another lipid emulsion that provides calories (1.1 kcal/mL) and requires tubing/vial changes every 12 hours (see Acute & Critical Care Medicine chapter for more information).

NON-DIHYDROPYRIDINE CCBs

The non-DHP CCBs, verapamil and diltiazem, are primarily used to control HR in certain arrhythmias (e.g., atrial fibrillation) and are sometimes used for hypertension and chronic stable and vasospastic angina.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Diltiazem ***(Cardizem, Tiazac,*** *Cardizem CD, Cardizem LA, Cartia XT,* others) IR tablet, ER tablet (24-HR), ER capsule (12-HR), ER capsule (24-HR), injection	120-360 mg daily; max dose varies with product IR tablet: daily dose given in 4 divided doses ER capsule (12-HR): daily dose given in 2 divided doses	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Hypotension (SBP < 90 mmHg) or cardiogenic shock; 2nd or 3rd degree AV block or sick sinus syndrome (unless patient has a functioning artificial ventricular pacemaker), atrial flutter or atrial fibrillation and an accessory bypass tract, concurrent use with an IV beta-blocker (IV CCBs only) Diltiazem: acute MI and pulmonary congestion Verapamil: severe left ventricular dysfunction **WARNINGS** Heart failure (may worsen symptoms), bradycardia, ↓ BP, acute liver injury/↑ LFTs, cardiac conduction abnormalities (diltiazem), hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (verapamil) **SIDE EFFECTS** Constipation (more with verapamil), gingival hyperplasia, edema (more with diltiazem), headache, dizziness, cutaneous hypersensitivity reactions (diltiazem) **MONITORING** BP, HR, ECG, LFTs **NOTES** IV:PO dose conversions are not 1:1
Verapamil *(Verelan, Verelan PM, Calan SR*)* IR tablet, ER tablet, ER capsule (24-HR), injection	120-480 mg daily IR: daily dose given in 3 divided doses ER: daily dose can be given in 1-2 divided doses *Verelan PM:* daily dose given QHS	

**Brand discontinued but name still used in practice.*

CALCIUM CHANNEL BLOCKER DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Non-DHP CCBs: use caution with other drugs that ↓ HR, including beta-blockers, digoxin, clonidine, amiodarone and dexmedetomidine.
- All CCBs (except clevidipine) are major substrates of CYP450 3A4. Check for drug interactions; it may be recommended to use caution or avoid concurrent use with strong CYP3A4 inducers or inhibitors. Do not use with grapefruit juice.
- Diltiazem and verapamil are substrates and inhibitors of P-gp and moderate inhibitors of CYP3A4; they can increase the concentration of many other drugs, such as select statins. Patients taking simvastatin or lovastatin should use lower doses (see Dyslipidemia chapter) or use a statin that is not metabolized by CYP3A4 (e.g., pitavastatin, pravastatin, rosuvastatin).

RENIN-ANGIOTENSIN-ALDOSTERONE SYSTEM INHIBITORS

Angiotensin II (Ang II) causes vasoconstriction (↑ SVR) and increased release of aldosterone, which results in sodium and water retention (↑ preload). RAAS inhibitors decrease BP by inhibiting the effects of Ang II. ACE inhibitors and ARBs are preferred initial treatments for hypertension, but they should not be used together due to an increased risk for adverse effects (see RAAS Inhibitor Drug Interactions).

In addition to lowering BP, ACE inhibitors and ARBs have shown benefit for other disease states. For chronic kidney disease (e.g., eGFR < 60 mL/min/1.73 m^2 and/or albuminuria), they slow the progression of kidney damage by blocking the vasoconstricting effects of Ang II on the efferent arteriole in the nephron. This results in decreased filtration pressure and workload in the glomerulus. For heart failure, ACE inhibitors and ARBs protect the myocardium from the remodeling effects of Ang II and improve survival.

ACE inhibitors increase bradykinin levels and can therefore cause angioedema, a potentially fatal adverse effect. ARBs and aliskiren have a much lower risk of angioedema (because they do not impact bradykinin levels); however, healthcare providers should use clinical judgment when prescribing them to patients with a history of angioedema because the risk is multifactorial (e.g., Black patients have a higher risk). For testing purposes, all RAAS inhibitors should be avoided in patients with a history of angioedema.

ANGIOTENSIN-CONVERTING ENZYME INHIBITORS

ACE inhibitors end in "-pril." They block the conversion of angiotensin I (Ang I) to Ang II, resulting in ↓ vasoconstriction and ↓ aldosterone secretion. They also block the degradation of bradykinin, which can contribute to the side effects of cough and angioedema.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Benazepril *(Lotensin)*	10-40 mg daily in 1-2 divided doses	**BOXED WARNINGS** Can cause injury and death to the developing fetus when used in the 2nd and 3rd trimesters; discontinue as soon as pregnancy is detected **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Do not use with history of angioedema Do not use within 36 hours of sacubitril/valsartan Do not use with aliskiren in patients with diabetes **WARNINGS** Angioedema Hyperkalemia Renal impairment: ↑ risk with bilateral renal artery stenosis Hypotension/dizziness: ↑ risk if volume-depleted (e.g., concurrent diuretic use) **SIDE EFFECTS** See warnings; can also cause cough, headache **MONITORING** BP, K, renal function (SCr), s/sx of angioedema
Enalapril *(Vasotec,* *Epaned* oral solution)	PO: 5-40 mg daily in 1-2 divided doses	
Enalaprilat *(Vasotec IV)*	IV (enalaprilat): 0.625-5 mg Q6H	
Lisinopril *(Zestril,* *Qbrelis* oral solution)	5-40 mg daily	
Quinapril *(Accupril)*	10-80 mg daily in 1-2 divided doses	
Ramipril *(Altace)*	2.5-20 mg daily in 1-2 divided doses	
Captopril	12.5-150 mg daily in 2-3 divided doses	
Fosinopril	10-40 mg daily	
Moexipril	3.75-30 mg daily in 1-2 divided doses	
Perindopril	4-16 mg daily	
Trandolapril	1-4 mg daily	

ANGIOTENSIN RECEPTOR BLOCKERS

ARBs end in "-sartan." They block Ang II from binding to the angiotensin II type-1 (AT1) receptor on vascular smooth muscle, preventing vasoconstriction, and on the adrenal gland, preventing aldosterone secretion and subsequent sodium and water retention.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Irbesartan *(Avapro)*	150-300 mg daily	Same as ACE inhibitors except: No cough Less angioedema No washout period required with sacubitril/valsartan Additional safety issues unique to ARBs include: **WARNINGS** Olmesartan: sprue-like enteropathy (severe, chronic diarrhea with substantial weight loss) can occur months to years after drug initiation **NOTES** Azilsartan: keep in original container to protect from light and moisture
Losartan *(Cozaar)*	25-100 mg daily in 1-2 divided doses	
Olmesartan *(Benicar)*	20-40 mg daily	
Valsartan *(Diovan)*	80-320 mg daily	
Azilsartan *(Edarbi)*	40-80 mg daily	
Candesartan *(Atacand)*	8-32 mg daily	
Telmisartan *(Micardis)*	20-80 mg daily	

DIRECT RENIN INHIBITOR

Aliskiren directly inhibits renin, which is responsible for the conversion of angiotensinogen to Ang I. A decrease in the formation of Ang I results in a decrease in the formation of Ang II.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Aliskiren *(Tekturna)*	150-300 mg daily Take with or without food but be consistent in administration with regard to meals Avoid high fat foods (reduces absorption)	Same as ARBs except: **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Do not use with an ACE inhibitor or ARB in patients with diabetes **NOTES** Tablets must be protected from moisture

RAAS INHIBITOR DRUG INTERACTIONS

- All RAAS inhibitors ↑ the risk of hyperkalemia. Other medications that increase potassium (e.g., potassium-sparing diuretics) should be used cautiously. Avoid salt substitutes that contain potassium chloride (instead of sodium chloride).
- Do not use more than one RAAS inhibitor together (e.g., ACE inhibitor + ARB) due to an ↑ risk of renal impairment, hypotension and hyperkalemia. Aliskiren in combination with an ACE inhibitor or ARB is contraindicated in patients with diabetes.
- NSAIDs should be used cautiously in combination with ACE inhibitors or ARBs due to an ↑ risk of renal impairment and reduced antihypertensive efficacy.
- ACE inhibitors and ARBs should not be used in combination with sacubitril/valsartan. If switching from an ACE inhibitor to sacubitril/valsartan, or vice versa, a 36-hour washout period is required. See Chronic Heart Failure chapter.
- ACE inhibitors and ARBs can ↓ lithium renal clearance and the ↑ risk of lithium toxicity.

ADDITIONAL DRUGS FOR TREATING HYPERTENSION

POTASSIUM-SPARING DIURETICS

Triamterene and amiloride are potassium-sparing diuretics that exert their effects by directly blocking sodium channels in the late distal convoluted tubule and collecting duct of the nephron (see Nephron diagram earlier in the chapter). This increases sodium and water excretion but conserves potassium. Because sodium reabsorption is limited in this section of the nephron, these drugs have minimal BP-lowering effects; they are primarily used in combination with thiazide diuretics to counteract the mild potassium losses seen with thiazide diuretics.

The other potassium-sparing diuretics, spironolactone and eplerenone, are aldosterone receptor antagonists; they indirectly inhibit sodium channels by blocking the aldosterone receptor site and are the preferred add-on drugs for resistant hypertension (uncontrolled BP despite maximum tolerated doses of a DHP CCB + thiazide diuretic + ACE inhibitor or ARB). They are also used first line for heart failure. Spironolactone is a non-selective aldosterone receptor antagonist; it also blocks androgen and exhibits endocrine side effects. Eplerenone is a selective aldosterone receptor antagonist that does not exhibit endocrine side effects.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Amiloride	5-10 mg daily in 1-2 divided doses	**BOXED WARNINGS** Amiloride and triamterene: hyperkalemia (K > 5.5 mEq/L) – more likely in patients with diabetes, renal impairment, or elderly patients **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Hyperkalemia, severe renal impairment, Addison disease (spironolactone), taking strong CYP3A4 inhibitors (eplerenone) **SIDE EFFECTS** Hyperkalemia (↑ risk if renal impairment), dizziness, hyperchloremic metabolic acidosis (rare) Spironolactone: gynecomastia, breast tenderness, impotence, irregular menses, amenorrhea **MONITORING** BP, K, renal function, fluid status **NOTES** Spironolactone oral suspension is not therapeutically equivalent to tablets; doses > 100 mg can cause supratherapeutic levels; use tablets only for doses > 100 mg
Triamterene *(Dyrenium)* **+ HCTZ *(Maxzide, Maxzide-25)***	50-300 mg daily in 1-2 divided doses + HCTZ: 37.5 mg/25 mg daily + HCTZ: 75 mg/50 mg daily	
Spironolactone ***Aldactone*** Tablet *CaroSpir* Oral suspension	25-100 mg daily in 1-2 divided doses	
Eplerenone *(Inspra)*	50-100 mg daily in 1-2 divided doses	

POTASSIUM-SPARING DIURETIC DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Potassium-sparing diuretics ↑ risk of hyperkalemia. There is an additive risk when these medications are used with other drugs that cause hyperkalemia (see Drug Interactions chapter) and/or potassium supplements.
- Eplerenone is a major substrate of CYP3A4; do not use with strong CYP3A4 inhibitors (e.g., ketoconazole, itraconazole, clarithromycin, ritonavir).

BETA-BLOCKERS

Beta-blockers mostly end in "-olol." They competitively block beta-1 and/or beta-2 adrenergic receptors; their actions at beta-1 receptors (located primarily in heart muscle) result in decreased HR and myocardial contractility, which decreases BP. Because beta-2 receptor blockade causes bronchoconstriction, a beta-1 selective drug is preferred in patients with bronchospastic disease (e.g., asthma, COPD). Carvedilol and labetalol also block alpha-1 receptors (located primarily in vasculature); this decreases peripheral vasoconstriction and lowers BP.

Beta-blockers with intrinsic sympathomimetic activity (ISA) (e.g., acebutolol, pindolol) partially stimulate beta receptors at rest while still blocking the effects of catecholamines (e.g., norepinephrine). This may be useful in patients with bradycardia at rest who require a beta-blocker, but they are not recommended post-MI or in heart failure patients as they do not lower HR and myocardial oxygen demand as much as beta-blockers without ISA.

Beta-blockers are not recommended first-line for hypertension unless the patient has a comorbid condition for which beta-blockers are indicated (e.g., post-MI, stable angina, heart failure). Selection of a specific beta-blocker will depend on the condition being treated. For example, bisoprolol, carvedilol or metoprolol succinate should be used if treating heart failure with reduced ejection fraction.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Beta-1 Selective Blockers		
Atenolol *(Tenormin)*	25-100 mg daily in 1-2 divided doses	**BOXED WARNINGS** Do not discontinue abruptly (particularly in patients with CAD/IHD); taper dose over 1-2 weeks to avoid acute tachycardia, hypertension or ischemia **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Severe bradycardia; 2nd or 3rd degree AV block or sick sinus syndrome (unless a permanent pacemaker is in place); overt cardiac failure or cardiogenic shock Esmolol: pulmonary hypertension; use of IV non-DHP CCBs **WARNINGS** Use caution in patients with diabetes: can worsen hypoglycemia and mask hypoglycemic symptoms (see Diabetes chapter) Use caution with bronchospastic diseases (e.g., asthma, COPD) Use caution with Raynaud's/other peripheral vascular diseases Can mask signs of hyperthyroidism (e.g., tachycardia) **SIDE EFFECTS** Bradycardia, hypotension, CNS effects (e.g., fatigue, dizziness, depression), impotence, cold extremities (can exacerbate Raynaud's) **MONITORING** HR, BP **NOTES** Take metoprolol tartrate and succinate with or immediately after food Metoprolol tartrate IV is not equivalent to PO (IV:PO ratio is 1:2.5) When switching from metoprolol tartrate to metoprolol succinate, the same total daily dose of metoprolol should be used Metoprolol succinate ER capsule can be opened and the contents sprinkled on 1 tsp of soft food (e.g., applesauce, pudding, yogurt) Metoprolol succinate ER tablet can be cut in half but should not be crushed or chewed For beta-1 selective drugs, remember: "AMEBBA" – Atenolol, Metoprolol, Esmolol, Bisoprolol, Betaxolol, Acebutolol
Esmolol *(Brevibloc)* Injection	500 mg/kg IV bolus followed by 50 mcg/kg/min continuous IV infusion; titrate as needed to a maximum of 300 mcg/kg/min	
Metoprolol tartrate *(Lopressor)* Tablet, injection **Metoprolol succinate** ***Toprol XL*** ER tablet *Kapspargo Sprinkle* ER capsule	IR: 50-200 mg BID XL: 25-400 mg daily	
Acebutolol	200-1,200 mg daily in 1-2 divided doses	
Betaxolol *Betoptic S* – ophthalmic	5-20 mg daily	
Bisoprolol	2.5-20 mg daily	

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Beta-1 Selective Blocker with Nitric Oxide-Dependent Vasodilation		
Nebivolol *(Bystolic)*	5-40 mg daily CrCl < 30 mL/min or moderate liver impairment, start at 2.5 mg daily	Same as above plus: **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Severe liver impairment (Child-Pugh class B or C) Side Effects Headache, nausea, diarrhea, ↑ TGs, ↓ HDL
Beta-1 and Beta-2 Blockers (Non-Selective)		
Propranolol *(Inderal LA, Inderal XL, InnoPran XL, Hemangeol)* Tablet, ER capsule, oral solution, injection	IR: 80-640 mg in 2-4 divided doses LA: 80-640 mg daily XL: 80-120 mg daily	Same as for beta-1 selective blockers plus: **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Bronchial asthma **NOTES** Propranolol has high lipid solubility (lipophilic) and crosses the blood-brain barrier; this makes it useful for select non-cardiac conditions (e.g., migraine prophylaxis, essential tremor), but it has more CNS effects Non-selective beta-blockers are used to prevent variceal hemorrhage in patients with portal hypertension (see Hepatitis & Liver Disease chapter)
Nadolol *(Corgard*)*	40-320 mg daily	
Pindolol	5-30 mg BID	
Timolol *Timoptic* – ophthalmic	10-30 mg BID	
Non-Selective Beta-Blockers and Alpha-1 Blockers		
Carvedilol *(Coreg, Coreg CR)* Tablet, ER capsule	IR: 6.25-25 mg BID CR: 20-80 mg daily	Same as for beta-1 selective and non-selective blockers plus: **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Severe hepatic impairment, bronchial asthma **WARNINGS** Intraoperative floppy iris syndrome has occurred in cataract surgery patients taking or previously treated with an alpha-1 blocker **SIDE EFFECTS** Edema, weight gain **NOTES** Take all forms of carvedilol with food to ↓ the rate of absorption and the risk of orthostatic hypotension Carvedilol CR has lower bioavailability than carvedilol IR; dose conversions are not 1:1 (e.g., IR 3.125 mg BID = CR 10 mg daily)
Labetalol Tablet, injection	PO: 100-1,200 mg BID IV: 10-20 mg bolus, followed by 20-80 mg every 10 min or 0.5-2 mg/min continuous infusion titrated to a max of 10 mg/min	Same as above for carvedilol plus: **SIDE EFFECTS** Nausea **NOTES** Drug of choice in pregnancy Injection is commonly used in the hospital setting and can be administered by repeated IV push or slow continuous infusion

**Brand discontinued but name still used in practice.*

BETA-BLOCKER DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Use caution when administering other drugs that ↓ HR, including diltiazem, verapamil, digoxin, clonidine, amiodarone and dexmedetomidine.
- Beta-blockers can enhance the hypoglycemic effects of insulin and sulfonylureas and mask some of the symptoms of hypoglycemia (e.g., shakiness, palpitations, anxiety); sweating, and possibly hunger, will still be present.
- Some beta-blockers can ↓ insulin secretion, causing hyperglycemia. Monitor blood glucose in diabetes.
- Carvedilol, propranolol, metoprolol and nebivolol are major substrates of CYP2D6. Monitor for drug interactions.
- Carvedilol and propranolol are inhibitors of P-gp and can ↑ the concentration of P-gp substrates (e.g., cyclosporine, dabigatran, digoxin, ranolazine).

CENTRALLY-ACTING ALPHA-2 ADRENERGIC AGONISTS

These drugs decrease BP by stimulating presynaptic alpha-2 adrenergic receptors in the brain; this decreases sympathetic outflow of norepinephrine, which leads to a reduction in SVR and HR. Clonidine can be used for resistant hypertension and in patients who cannot swallow (e.g., due to dysphagia, dementia) since it is available in a patch formulation. Since the patch is changed weekly, it can also help with adherence.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Clonidine Tablet ER tablet: *Nexiclon XR* Patch: ***Catapres-TTS*** Injection: *Duraclon* – for epidural use only ***Kapvay**** – for ADHD	IR: 0.1-0.2 mg BID, max dose 2.4 mg daily ER: 0.17 mg QHS, max dose 0.52 mg QHS Patch: 0.1 mg/24 hr every 7 days; can titrate every 1-2 weeks up to 0.3 mg/24 hr strength patch	**WARNINGS** Do not discontinue abruptly (can cause rebound hypertension, sweating, anxiety, tremors); must taper gradually over 2-4 days **SIDE EFFECTS** Dry mouth, somnolence, fatigue, dizziness, constipation, ↓ HR, hypotension, impotence, headache, behavioral changes (irritability, confusion, anxiety, nightmares) Clonidine patch: skin rash, pruritus, erythema **MONITORING** BP, HR, mental status **NOTES** Clonidine patch: apply weekly to a clean, dry and hairless area of skin on the upper outer arm or upper chest; remove before MRI; can apply the adhesive cover over the patch if it loosens; do not cut patch; takes 2-3 days to reach therapeutic effect; overlap is needed when transitioning from oral clonidine (consult package labeling)
Guanfacine IR **Guanfacine ER *(Intuniv)*** – for ADHD	0.5-2 mg QHS	
Methyldopa	250 mg BID-TID; max dose is 3 g daily	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Concurrent use with MAO inhibitors and active liver disease **WARNINGS** Hemolytic anemia (detected by a positive Coombs test), hepatic necrosis **SIDE EFFECTS** Drug-induced lupus erythematosus (DILE), edema or weight gain (control with diuretics), ↑ prolactin levels, transient sedation, headache **NOTES** Methyldopa can be used in pregnancy

**Brand discontinued but name still used in practice.*

DIRECT VASODILATORS

These drugs cause direct vasodilation of arterioles (little effect on veins), resulting in decreased SVR and BP.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Hydralazine Tablet, injection	PO: 10-50 mg QID, max dose 300 mg daily IM, IV: 10-20 mg Q4-6H PRN	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Mitral valvular rheumatic heart disease, CAD **WARNINGS** Drug-induced lupus erythematosus (DILE – dose and duration related) **SIDE EFFECTS** Peripheral edema, headache, flushing, palpitations, reflex tachycardia, nausea/vomiting, peripheral neuritis, blood dyscrasias, hypotension **MONITORING** HR, BP, ANA titer
Minoxidil *Rogaine Mens, Rogaine Womens* – OTC topical for hair growth	5-40 mg daily in 1-3 divided doses, max dose 100 mg daily	**BOXED WARNING** Potent vasodilator – can cause pericardial effusion (due to fluid retention) and angina exacerbations (due to reflex tachycardia); administer with a loop diuretic and beta-blocker **CONTRAINDICATION** Pheochromocytoma **SIDE EFFECTS** Hair growth, tachycardia, fluid retention (use caution in patients with heart failure or recent MI)

ALPHA-BLOCKERS

Alpha-blockers (e.g., doxazosin, prazosin, terazosin) inhibit alpha-1 adrenergic receptors, which results in peripheral vasodilation and a decrease in SVR. They are not recommended for hypertension but may be used in men who have hypertension and benign prostatic hyperplasia (see Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia chapter).

MARKEDLY ELEVATED BP: ASYMPTOMATIC AND EMERGENCIES

Patients with markedly elevated BP (generally ≥ 180/120 mmHg), can be categorized into two groups:

- Hypertensive emergency: there is evidence of acute target organ damage (e.g., encephalopathy, stroke, acute kidney injury, acute coronary syndrome, aortic dissection, acute pulmonary edema).
  - ☐ Treat with IV medications (see Key Drugs Guy).
  - ☐ Decrease BP by no more than 25% (within the first hour), then if stable, decrease to ~160/100 mmHg in the next 2 – 6 hours.
- Asymptomatic (previously called hypertensive urgency): there is no evidence of acute target organ damage.
  - ☐ Start/restart chronic hypertension treatment; treat with short-acting oral medications (e.g., captopril, clonidine) as needed.
  - ☐ Decrease BP gradually over 24 – 48 hours.

KEY IV MEDICATIONS FOR HYPERTENSIVE EMERGENCIES

Clevidipine	Labetalol
Enalaprilat	Nicardipine
Esmolol	Nitroglycerin*
Hydralazine	Nitroprusside*

**Vasodilators discussed in the Acute & Critical Care Medicine chapter*

KEY COUNSELING POINTS

See the Drug Formulations and Patient Counseling chapter for counseling language/layman's terminology.

ALL HYPERTENSION PRODUCTS

- Can cause orthostasis.
- Check your blood pressure regularly.
- Take this drug as directed, even if you feel well.
  - ☐ Decreasing blood pressure decreases the risk of complications such as heart disease, kidney disease and stroke.

THIAZIDE DIURETICS

- Take this drug early in the day (no later than 4 PM) to avoid getting up at night to go to the bathroom.
- Can cause:
  - ☐ Hyperglycemia.
  - ☐ Photosensitivity.
  - ☐ Sexual dysfunction.

CALCIUM CHANNEL BLOCKERS

- Can cause:
  - ☐ Peripheral edema.
  - ☐ Gingival hyperplasia.
- Ghost tablet in stool *(Procardia XL)*.

ACE INHIBITORS, ARBs AND ALISKIREN

- Avoid in pregnancy (teratogenic).
- Can cause angioedema.
- ACE inhibitors: tell your healthcare provider if you develop a dry, hacking cough.

BETA-BLOCKERS

- Do not abruptly discontinue without consulting your healthcare provider.
- This medication can mask symptoms of low blood sugar. If you have diabetes, check blood sugar if you notice symptoms of sweating or hunger.
- Can cause sexual dysfunction.
- Take carvedilol with food.
- Take metoprolol with or immediately after meals.

CLONIDINE

- Do not abruptly discontinue without consulting your healthcare provider.
- Patch: apply weekly to upper outer arm or chest. The white adhesive cover can be applied over the patch to keep it in place. Remove before an MRI. Do not cut the patch.
- Can cause sexual dysfunction.

Select Guidelines/References

2017 ACC/AHA/AAPA/ABC/ACPM/AGS/APhA/ASH/ASPC/NMA/PCNA guideline for the prevention, detection, evaluation, and management of high blood pressure: a report of the American College of Cardiology/American Heart Association Task Force on Clinical Practice Guidelines. *Hypertension* 2018;71:e13-e115.

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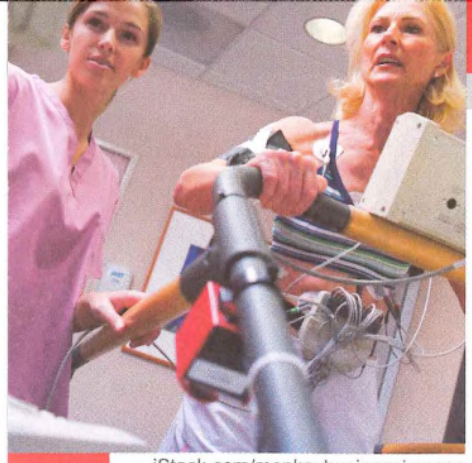

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CHAPTER 29

STABLE ANGINA

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BACKGROUND

Angina is chest pain, pressure, tightness or discomfort, usually caused by ischemia of the heart muscle or spasm of the coronary arteries. The chest pain is often described as "squeezing," "grip-like," "heavy" or "suffocating," and typically does not vary with position or respiration. In some patients (e.g., females, older adults, comorbid diabetes), angina can present as dyspnea, back pain or pain that mimics indigestion or GERD (e.g., burning, stabbing).

Stable angina, a type of chronic coronary disease, is associated with predictable chest pain, often brought on by exertion or emotional stress and relieved within minutes by rest or short-acting nitroglycerin. Unstable angina (UA) is a type of acute coronary syndrome (ACS); this is a medical emergency where the chest pain increases (in frequency, intensity or duration) and is not relieved with nitroglycerin or rest (see the Acute Coronary Syndromes chapter).

PATHOPHYSIOLOGY

Chest pain occurs when there is an imbalance between myocardial oxygen demand (workload) and supply (blood flow). Myocardial oxygen demand increases when the heart is working harder due to an increased heart rate, contractility or left ventricular wall tension [caused by increased preload (volume of blood returning to the heart) and/or afterload (systemic vascular resistance, or SVR)]. With stable angina, myocardial oxygen supply is often decreased due to atherosclerosis (plaque build up) within the inner walls of the coronary arteries. This is known as coronary artery disease (CAD); it causes narrowing of the arteries and reduced blood flow to the heart.

When chest pain is caused by coronary artery vasospasm, it is called vasospastic angina (or variant or Prinzmetal angina). Vasospastic angina can occur at rest and be caused by illicit drug use, particularly cocaine.

DIAGNOSIS

The risk factors for stable angina are similar to other types of heart disease, vascular disease and stroke, and include hypertension, smoking, dyslipidemia, diabetes, obesity and physical inactivity. To assess the likelihood of CAD and diagnose stable angina, a cardiac stress test or cardiac imaging is performed.

The cardiac stress test increases myocardial oxygen demand with either exercise (e.g., walking on a treadmill, pedaling a stationary bicycle) or IV medications [e.g., adenosine, dipyridamole, dobutamine or regadenoson (*Lexiscan*)]. As myocardial oxygen demand increases, the patient is monitored for the development of symptoms (e.g., chest pain, dyspnea, lightheadedness), changes in heart rate and blood pressure or abnormalities on an ECG (e.g., ST segment changes).

When the diagnosis of stable angina is certain, coronary angiography can be performed to assess the extent of atherosclerosis and need for revascularization.

EVALUATION OF STABLE ANGINA

History and physical

CBC, CK-MB, troponins (I or T), aPTT, PT/INR, lipid panel, glucose

ECG (at rest and during chest pain)

Cardiac stress test/stress imaging

Cardiac catheterization/angiography

NON-DRUG TREATMENT

Patients should be encouraged to follow a heart healthy diet (e.g., emphasizing fruits, vegetables, legumes, nuts, whole grains, lean proteins, no trans fat, < 2,300 mg/day of sodium), maintain a BMI of 18.5 – 24.9 kg/m^2, and maintain a waist circumference < 35 inches in females and < 40 inches in males.

Patients should engage in ≥ 150 minutes of moderate-intensity (or ≥ 75 minutes of high-intensity) aerobic activity per week, supplemented by daily lifestyle activities (e.g., walking breaks at work, gardening). Medically supervised programs, such as cardiac rehabilitation, are encouraged for at-risk patients.

Patients who smoke should quit, and secondhand smoke should be avoided. Alcohol intake should be limited to 1 drink/day (4 oz wine, 12 oz beer or 1 oz of spirits) for women and 1 – 2 drinks/day for men. Chronic NSAIDs should not be used.

DRUG TREATMENT

Stable angina is a type of atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease (ASCVD). Comorbid conditions (e.g., dyslipidemia, hypertension, diabetes) should be aggressively managed, and include the use of an ACE inhibitor or ARB (for hypertension and CAD) and a high-intensity statin (see the Dyslipidemia chapter). Vaccines (e.g., influenza, pneumococcal, COVID-19) should be administered per the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommendations for patients with heart disease (see the Immunizations chapter).

TREATMENT APPROACH FOR STABLE ANGINA

A – Antiplatelet and antianginal drugs

B – Blood pressure

C – Cholesterol (statins) and cigarettes (cessation)

D – Diet and diabetes

E – Exercise and education

The treatment goals for stable angina are to improve quality of life (by reducing chest pain episodes) and to prevent future cardiovascular events (e.g., MI, heart failure, death). This can be accomplished with an antiplatelet drug (for secondary prevention) and antianginal drug (to reduce chest pain).

Antiplatelet treatment prevents platelets from sticking together and forming a clot that can block an artery and reduce blood flow to the heart. Aspirin is the recommended antiplatelet; clopidogrel is used when there is an allergy or other contraindication to aspirin.

Dual antiplatelet therapy (DAPT) (e.g., concomitant aspirin and clopidogrel) is not useful for secondary prevention in patients with stable angina and is recommended only after recent ACS or percutaneous coronary intervention (PCI) (see the Acute Coronary Syndromes chapter). Low-dose rivaroxaban in combination with aspirin is indicated to reduce the risk of cardiovascular events in select patients with CAD or peripheral artery disease (PAD).

Antianginal treatment decreases myocardial oxygen demand or increases myocardial oxygen supply (see the Antianginal Treatment table later in the chapter). Beta-blockers, dihydropyridine (DHP) or non-dihydropyridine (non-DHP) calcium channel blockers (CCBs), or long-acting nitrates can be used to prevent symptoms. If the patient remains symptomatic with initial monotherapy, adding a second antianginal drug from a different therapeutic class is recommended. Ranolazine can be can be considered after these therapies, if needed. Short-acting nitroglycerin, as a sublingual (SL) tablet or translingual (TL) spray, is recommended for immediate relief of angina in all patients.

ANTIPLATELET DRUGS

Aspirin irreversibly inhibits cyclooxygenase-1 and 2 (COX-1 and COX-2) enzymes, which results in decreased prostaglandin (PG) and thromboxane A2 (TXA2) production; TXA2 is a potent vasoconstrictor and inducer of platelet aggregation. Clopidogrel is a prodrug that irreversibly inhibits P2Y12 ADP-mediated platelet activation and aggregation. Refer to the Acute Coronary Syndromes chapter for an image depicting antiplatelet drug mechanisms of action.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Aspirin *(Bayer, Bufferin, Ecotrin*, Ascriptin, Durlaza*, Vazalore,* others) OTC: tablet, chewable tablet, enteric-coated tablet, liquid-filled capsule, suppository Rx: ER capsule *(Durlaza*)* + omeprazole *(Yosprala)* See the Pain chapter for more information on aspirin products	75-100 mg daily	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** NSAID or salicylate allergy; children and teenagers with a viral infection (due to the risk of Reye's syndrome, which has symptoms that include somnolence, N/V and confusion); rhinitis, nasal polyps or asthma (due to the risk of urticaria, angioedema or bronchospasm) **WARNINGS** Bleeding, including GI bleed/ulceration [↑ risk with heavy alcohol use or when used with other drugs that have bleeding risk (e.g., NSAIDs, anticoagulants, other antiplatelets)]; tinnitus (a sign of salicylate overdose) **SIDE EFFECTS** Dyspepsia, heartburn, bleeding, nausea **MONITORING** Symptoms of bleeding, bruising **NOTES** Used indefinitely in stable angina; ↓ incidence of CV events and death Non-enteric coated, chewable aspirin is preferred in ACS; if only enteric-coated aspirin is available, it should be chewed (325 mg) ER products should not be used if rapid onset is needed (e.g., ACS, pre-PCI) To ↓ nausea, use EC or buffered product or take with food PPIs may be used to protect the GI tract from chronic aspirin use; consider the risks of chronic PPI use (↓ bone density, ↑ infection risk)
Clopidogrel *(Plavix)* Tablet	75 mg daily	**BOXED WARNING** Clopidogrel is a prodrug. Effectiveness depends on the conversion to an active metabolite, mainly by CYP450 2C19. Poor metabolizers of CYP2C19 exhibit higher cardiovascular events than patients with normal CYP2C19 function. Tests to check CYP2C19 genotype can be used as an aid in determining a therapeutic strategy. Consider alternative treatments in patients identified as CYP2C19 poor metabolizers. See the Pharmacogenomics chapter. **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Active serious bleeding (e.g., GI bleed, intracranial hemorrhage) **WARNINGS** Bleeding risk (stop 5 days prior to elective surgery); do not use with omeprazole or esomeprazole (see the Drug Interactions section); premature discontinuation (↑ risk of thrombosis); thrombotic thrombocytopenic purpura (TTP) **SIDE EFFECTS** Generally well tolerated, unless bleeding occurs **MONITORING** Symptoms of bleeding, Hgb/Hct as necessary **NOTES** Used in stable angina when there is a contraindication to aspirin

**Brand discontinued but name still used in practice.*

ANTIPLATELET DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Most drug interactions are due to additive effects when antiplatelet drugs are used with other drugs that ↑ bleeding risk (e.g., anticoagulants, NSAIDs, SSRIs, SNRIs, some dietary supplements). See the Drug Interactions chapter.
- Aspirin: use caution in combination with other ototoxic drugs (see the Drug Interactions chapter).
- Clopidogrel: avoid moderate or strong CYP2C19 inhibitors (e.g., omeprazole, esomeprazole).

ANTIANGINAL TREATMENT

DRUG	MECHANISM OF CLINICAL BENEFIT	CLINICAL NOTES
Beta-Blockers See the Hypertension chapter for a complete review of beta-blockers	Reduce myocardial oxygen demand: ↓ HR, ↓ contractility and ↓ left ventricular wall tension	More effective than nitrates and CCBs for silent ischemia; avoid in vasospastic angina
Calcium Channel Blockers See the Hypertension chapter for a complete review of calcium channel blockers	Reduce myocardial oxygen demand: non-DHPs ↓ HR and contractility; DHPs ↓ SVR (afterload) Increase myocardial oxygen supply: all CCBs ↑ blood flow through coronary arteries	Slow-release or long-acting CCBs are effective; avoid nifedipine IR (short-acting DHP) DHPs are preferred when CCBs are used with beta-blockers (due to the risk of excessive bradycardia when non-DHPs are used with beta-blockers) Preferred for vasospastic angina
Nitrates	Reduce myocardial oxygen demand: ↓ preload (free radical nitric oxide produces vasodilation of veins more than arteries) Increases myocardial oxygen supply: ↑ blood flow through collateral (non-atherosclerotic) arteries	**SL tablets or TL spray** Recommended for all patients for fast relief of anginal episodes **Long-acting nitrates** A nitrate-free interval is required to prevent tolerance (see the Nitrates table on next page)
Ranolazine *(Aspruzyo Sprinkle)*	Selectively inhibits the late phase Na current and ↓ intracellular Ca; can decrease myocardial oxygen demand by decreasing ventricular tension and oxygen consumption	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Liver cirrhosis; do not use with strong CYP3A4 inhibitors or inducers **WARNINGS** QT prolongation Acute renal failure observed when CrCl < 30 mL/min **SIDE EFFECTS** Dizziness, headache, constipation, nausea **MONITORING** ECG, K, renal function **NOTES** Not for acute treatment of chest pain Can use as add-on treatment Has little to no clinical effects on HR or BP

NITRATES USED IN STABLE ANGINA*

FORMULATIONS	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Short-Acting Nitrates	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Hypersensitivity to organic nitrates, do not use with PDE-5 inhibitors or soluble guanylate cyclase stimulators (e.g., riociguat) (see Nitrate Drug Interactions section below) Short-acting nitrates: ↑ intracranial pressure, severe anemia, circulatory failure and shock **WARNINGS** Hypotension, tachyphylaxis (tolerance/↓ effectiveness), can aggravate angina caused by hypertrophic cardiomyopathy **SIDE EFFECTS** Headache, flushing, syncope, dizziness **MONITORING** BP, HR, chest pain **NOTES** **Short-acting nitrates** Used PRN for immediate relief of chest pain Store nitroglycerin SL tablets in the original amber glass bottle and keep tightly capped after each use (to maintain potency) **Long-acting nitrates** Require a 10-12 hour nitrate-free interval to ↓ tolerance (longer for some products) ■ Patch: wear on for 12-14 hours, off for 10-12 hours; rotate sites; dispose of safely, away from children and pets ■ Ointment: dosed BID, 6 hours apart with a 10-12 hour nitrate-free interval ■ Isosorbide mononitrate: IR dosed BID, 7 hours apart (e.g., 8 AM and 3 PM); ER dosed once daily in the AM ■ Isosorbide dinitrate: IR dosed BID (same as above) or TID, take at 8 AM, 12 PM and 4 PM for a 14-hour nitrate-free interval (or similar) Isosorbide dinitrate in combination with hydralazine is the preferred combination for HFrEF
Nitroglycerin SL tablet *(Nitrostat)* 0.3 mg, 0.4 mg, 0.6 mg	
Nitroglycerin TL spray *(NitroMist, Nitrolingual)* 0.4 mg/spray	
Long-Acting Nitrates	
Nitroglycerin ointment 2% *(Nitro-Bid)*	
Nitroglycerin transdermal patch *(Nitro-Dur)* 0.1, 0.2, 0.3, 0.4, 0.6, 0.8 mg/hr	
Nitroglycerin ER capsule *(Nitro-Time)* 2.5 mg, 6 mg, 9 mg	
Isosorbide mononitrate tablet IR: 10 mg, 20 mg ER: 30 mg, 60 mg, 120 mg	
Isosorbide dinitrate IR *(Isordil)* IR: 5 mg, 10 mg, 20 mg, 30 mg, 40 mg	

**IV nitroglycerin is discussed in the Acute & Critical Care Medicine chapter.*

NITRATE DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Do not use long-acting nitrates in combination with PDE-5 inhibitors or soluble guanylate cyclase stimulators (e.g., riociguat); use caution with other antihypertensive medications and alcohol, as these combinations can cause a significant decrease in BP.
  - ☐ Short-acting nitrates should not be used if a PDE-5 inhibitor was taken recently (avanafil in the past 12 hours, sildenafil or vardenafil in the past 24 hours or tadalafil in the past 48 hours). Occasionally, and with careful monitoring, nitrates can be used for an emergency (e.g., MI) in a patient who has recently taken a PDE-5 inhibitor.

RANOLAZINE DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Ranolazine is a major substrate of CYP3A4 and a minor substrate of CYP2D6 and P-gp. It is a weak inhibitor of CYP3A4, 2D6 and P-gp. Do not use with strong CYP3A4 inhibitors (e.g., protease inhibitors, cobicistat) or inducers.

KEY COUNSELING POINTS

See the Drug Formulations and Patient Counseling chapter for counseling language/layman's terminology.

ASPIRIN

- Can cause:
  - ☐ Bleeding/bruising.
  - ☐ Dyspepsia.
  - ☐ Allergic reaction.
  - ☐ Tinnitus or loss of hearing with overdose.

CLOPIDOGREL

- Can cause:
  - ☐ Bleeding/bruising.
  - ☐ Thrombotic thrombocytopenic purpura (TTP).

ALL NITRATE PRODUCTS

- Can cause:
  - ☐ Orthostasis.
  - ☐ Flushing and headache. Often a sign the medication is working. Usually goes away with time.
- Nitrate-free interval required with long-acting products.
- Drug interactions with phosphodiesterase-5 inhibitors.

SHORT-ACTING NITRATES

- Take one dose at first sign of chest pain.
- Call 911 immediately if chest pain persists after the first dose. Continue to take two additional doses at five minute intervals while waiting for the ambulance to arrive. Do not take more than three doses within 15 minutes.

NITROGLYCERIN SL TABLETS

- Place the tablet under the tongue or between the inside of the cheek and the gums/teeth, and let it dissolve. Do not chew, crush or swallow.
- Slight burning or tingling sensation is not a sign of how well the medication is working.
- Keep tightly capped in the original amber glass bottle and store at room temperature. Remove one tablet only; do not let the other tablets get wet.

NITROGLYCERIN TL SPRAY

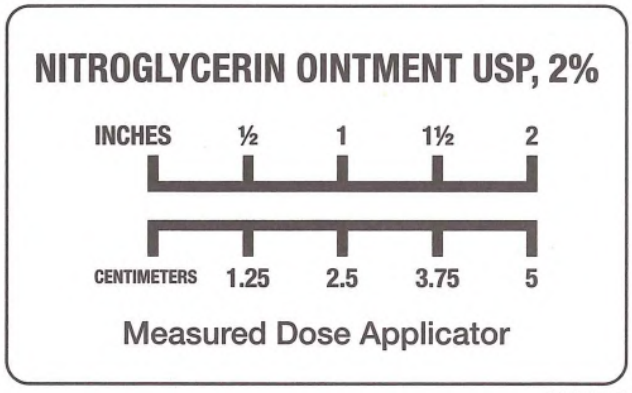
- Prime before first use and if not used within six weeks.
- Do not shake. Press the button firmly to release the spray onto or under the tongue. Close your mouth after the spray. Do not inhale the spray, and try not to swallow too quickly afterward. Do not spit or rinse the mouth for 5 – 10 minutes after the dose.

NITROGLYCERIN PATCH

- The chest is the preferred application site, though any area can be selected except the extremities below the knees or elbows.

NITROGLYCERIN OINTMENT

- Measure the dose of ointment with the dose-measuring applicator provided (see image below). Place the applicator on a flat surface, squeeze the ointment onto the applicator and place the applicator (ointment side down) on the chest or other desired area of the skin.
- Spread the ointment, using the dose-measuring applicator, lightly onto the skin. Do not rub into the skin. Tape the applicator into place.
- Can stain clothing. Cover the applicator completely.



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CHAPTER 30

ACUTE CORONARY SYNDROMES

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= Study Tip Gal

BACKGROUND

An acute coronary syndrome (ACS) results from plaque buildup (atherosclerosis) in the coronary arteries. The plaques are made up of fatty deposits that cause the arteries to narrow, making blood flow more difficult. The plaque can rupture, leading to clot (thrombus) formation and sudden, reduced blood flow (ischemia) to the heart. This causes an imbalance between myocardial oxygen supply and demand, resulting in symptoms (see section below) and/or cardiac muscle cell death (myocardial necrosis). Various risk factors (see box below) can lead to plaque buildup, many of which are modifiable.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

The classic symptoms of an ACS include chest pain (often described as discomfort, pressure or squeezing) lasting ≥ 10 minutes, severe dyspnea, diaphoresis, syncope/presyncope and/or palpitations. The pain can radiate to the arms, back, neck, jaw or epigastric region. Females, older adults and patients with diabetes are less likely to experience classic symptoms. Symptoms can occur at rest, or may be precipitated by minimal exertion, exercise, cold weather, extreme emotions, stress or sexual intercourse. ACS is a medical emergency. Patients prescribed sublingual nitroglycerin (NTG) should use one dose every five minutes for up to three doses to relieve chest pain. If chest pain is not improved or worse five minutes after the first dose, they should call 911.

RISK FACTORS

Age: males > 45 years, females > 55 years (or early hysterectomy)

Family history: first-degree relative with a coronary event before 55 years (male) or 65 years (female)

Smoking

Hypertension

Known coronary artery disease

Dyslipidemia

Diabetes

Chronic stable angina

Lack of exercise

Excessive alcohol

DIAGNOSIS

ACS encompasses non-ST segment elevation acute coronary syndromes (NSTE-ACS) and ST-segment elevation myocardial infarction (STEMI). NSTE-ACS describes both unstable angina (UA) and non-ST segment elevation myocardial infarction (NSTEMI). The types of ACS are differentiated based on ECG findings, the detection of cardiac enzymes and extent of blockage in the affected artery (see Study Tip Gal on the next page).

A 12-lead ECG should be performed and evaluated within ten minutes at the site of first medical contact (which could be in an ambulance). Patients with an acute MI (STEMI or NSTEMI) should be urgently transported to a hospital with percutaneous coronary intervention (PCI) capability, if possible.

The measurement of biochemical markers (cardiac enzymes), released into the bloodstream when myocardial cells die, helps establish the diagnosis. Cardiac troponins I and T (TnI and TnT) are the most sensitive and specific biomarkers for ACS. Levels should be obtained at presentation and 3 – 6 hours after symptom onset in all patients with ACS symptoms. Creatine kinase myocardial isoenzyme (CK-MB) and myoglobin are less sensitive markers but may still be monitored in clinical practice.

COMPARING UA, NSTEMI AND STEMI

	UA	NSTEMI	STEMI
Symptoms	Chest pain (described in text)		
Cardiac Enzymes	Negative	Positive	Positive
ECG Changes	None or transient ischemic changes*		ST segment elevation**
Blockage	Partial blockage		Complete blockage

**ST segment depression or prominent T-wave inversion*
***Meeting defined criteria in ≥ 2 contiguous leads (e.g., leads looking at the same area of the heart)*

TREATMENT

Treatment is aimed at providing immediate relief of ischemia and preventing MI expansion and death.

PCI OR MEDICAL MANAGEMENT

PCI is a coronary revascularization procedure that involves inflating a small balloon inside a coronary artery to widen it and improve blood flow. A stent (metal mesh) can be placed to keep the artery open.

- NSTE-ACS can be treated with medications alone (medical management) or with PCI (an early invasive strategy).
- A STEMI requires that blocked arteries be opened as quickly as possible with PCI or fibrinolysis.
  - PCI is preferred if it can be performed within 90 minutes of hospital arrival (optimal door-to-balloon time) or within 120 minutes of first medical contact (e.g., an ambulance).
  - If PCI is not possible within 120 minutes of first medical contact, fibrinolytic therapy is recommended and should be given within 30 minutes of hospital arrival (door-to-needle time).

DRUG TREATMENT

A combination of antianginal, antiplatelet and anticoagulant drugs are used after PCI or fibrinolytics (see Study Tip Gal to the right and the table on the next page). These work by different mechanisms:

- Antianginals: decrease myocardial oxygen demand or increase supply (blood flow) to relieve ischemia.
- Antiplatelets: inhibit platelet aggregation to prevent clot formation/growth.
- Anticoagulants: inhibit clotting factors to prevent clot formation/growth.

DRUG TREATMENT OPTIONS FOR ACS

MONA-GAP-BA

Morphine	**G**PIIb/IIIa antagonists	**B**eta-blockers
Oxygen	**A**nticoagulants	**A**CE inhibitors
Nitrates	**P**2Y12 inhibitors	
Aspirin		

- NSTE-ACS: MONA-GAP-BA +/- PCI
- STEMI: MONA-GAP-BA + PCI or fibrinolytic (PCI preferred)

Colors correspond with the drug summary table on the following page

MEDICATIONS TO AVOID IN THE ACUTE SETTING

- NSAIDs (except aspirin), whether nonselective or COX-2-selective, should not be administered during hospitalization due to ↑ risk of mortality, reinfarction, hypertension, cardiac rupture, renal insufficiency and heart failure.
- Immediate-release nifedipine should not be used due to ↑ risk of mortality.

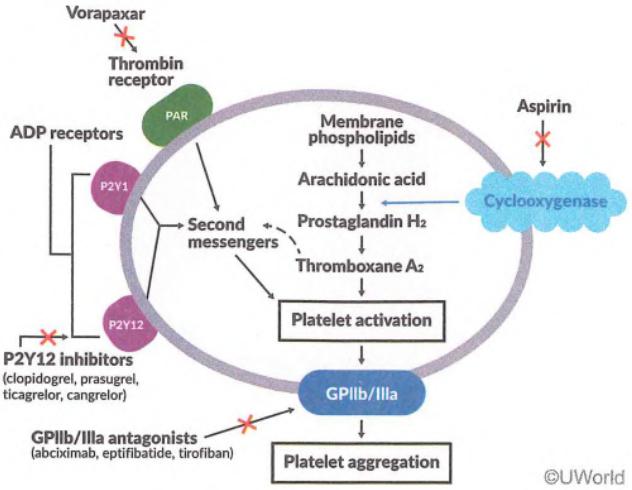
DRUGS FOR ACS (MONA-GAP-BA)

DRUG	CLINICAL BENEFIT	CLINICAL COMMENTS
Give these immediately (as needed)		
Morphine sulfate	Provides pain relief and helps anxiety	Not for routine use (has been shown to diminish antiplatelet effects); reserve for patients with unacceptable chest discomfort despite other treatments. Dose: 2-5 mg IV every 5-30 minutes PRN. Monitor for hypotension, N/V, bradycardia, sedation and respiratory depression. See the Pain chapter.
Oxygen		Administer if arterial oxygen saturation < 90% or respiratory distress.
Nitrates	Antianginal: dilate coronary arteries and improve collateral blood flow; ↓ preload and afterload (modestly); reduces chest pain	Sublingual NTG (0.4 mg every 5 minutes × 3 doses) if not already administered and the patient has persistent chest pain, hypertension or heart failure. IV NTG can be considered if symptoms persist. Do not use IV NTG if SBP < 90 mmHg, HR < 50 bpm or with a right ventricular infarction. PDE-5 inhibitors are contraindicated with NTG. See the Stable Angina and Sexual Dysfunction chapters.
Aspirin	See the Antiplatelet Drugs section and image on the following page	Non-enteric-coated, chewable aspirin (162-325 mg) should be given to all patients immediately if no contraindications are present (do not use extended-release aspirin products). A maintenance dose of aspirin 75-100 mg daily should be continued indefinitely. If intolerant to aspirin, clopidogrel or ticagrelor (discussed later in this chapter) may be used.
Give these next [choice of drugs relates to plan (PCI vs. CABG vs. medical management)]		
GPIIb/IIIa Receptor Antagonists	See the Antiplatelet Drugs section and image on the following page	Drugs include eptifibatide and tirofiban.
Anticoagulants	Inhibit clotting factors and can reduce infarct size	Drugs include LMWHs (e.g., enoxaparin, dalteparin), UFH and bivalirudin (preferred for STEMI). See the Anticoagulation chapter.
P2Y12 Inhibitors	See the Antiplatelet Drugs section and image on the following page	Drugs include clopidogrel, prasugrel and ticagrelor.
Give within 24 hours (as needed); continue as an outpatient		
Beta-Blockers	Antianginal: ↓ BP, HR and contractility; ↓ ischemia, reinfarction and arrhythmias; prevent cardiac remodeling; ↑ long-term survival	An oral, low-dose beta-blocker (beta-1 selective blocker without intrinsic sympathomimetic activity preferred) should be started within the first 24 hours unless contraindicated (e.g., decompensated heart failure, cardiogenic shock, HR < 45 bpm). If the patient has concomitant, stable HFrEF, choose bisoprolol, metoprolol succinate or carvedilol (see the Chronic Heart Failure chapter). An IV beta-blocker or an oral long-acting non-dihydropyridine calcium channel blocker (verapamil or diltiazem) are alternative options used in some situations.
ACE Inhibitors	Inhibit angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) and block the production of angiotensin II; prevent cardiac remodeling; ↓ preload and afterload	An oral ACE inhibitor should be started within the first 24 hours and continued indefinitely in all patients with left ventricular ejection fraction (LVEF) < 40%, hypertension, diabetes or stable CKD, unless contraindicated (use an ARB if the patient is ACE inhibitor intolerant). Use of an ACE inhibitor in other patients may be reasonable. Do not use an IV ACE inhibitor within the first 24 hours due to the risk of hypotension. See the Hypertension chapter.

ANTIPLATELET DRUGS

Antiplatelet drugs inhibit platelet aggregation and clot formation by different mechanisms (image to the right):

- Aspirin: irreversibly inhibits COX-1 and COX-2, which decreases the production of thromboxane A2 (TXA2) (an inducer of platelet aggregation).
- P2Y12 inhibitors: bind to the platelet adenosine diphosphate (ADP) P2Y12 receptors, preventing ADP-mediated activation of the GPIIb/IIIa receptor complex.
- GPIIb/IIIa receptor antagonists: block the platelet glycoprotein IIb/IIIa receptor, which is the binding site for fibrinogen, von Willebrand factor and other ligands.
- Protease-activated receptor-1 antagonist: binds to the PAR-1 receptor, preventing thrombin- and thrombin receptor agonist peptide-induced platelet aggregation.



P2Y12 INHIBITORS

Clopidogrel and prasugrel are structurally similar and classified as thienopyridines. They are prodrugs that irreversibly bind to the P2Y12 receptor. Ticagrelor is not a prodrug and has reversible binding to the receptor. P2Y12 inhibitors are commonly used with aspirin after an ACS, which is called dual antiplatelet therapy (DAPT). A higher one-time loading dose is required for P2Y12 inhibitors, either prior to PCI or at the time of diagnosis if PCI is not being performed, followed by a maintenance dose.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Clopidogrel *(Plavix)* Tablet	LD: 300-600 mg PO (600 mg for PCI) MD: 75 mg PO daily If age > 75 years and fibrinolytic therapy administered for STEMI, omit the loading dose and start 75 mg daily	**BOXED WARNINGS** Clopidogrel is a prodrug. Effectiveness depends on the conversion to an active metabolite, primarily by CYP450 2C19. Poor metabolizers of CYP2C19 exhibit higher cardiovascular events than patients with normal CYP2C19 function. Tests to check CYP2C19 genotype can be used to help determine a therapeutic strategy. Consider alternative treatments in patients identified as CYP2C19 poor metabolizers. See the Pharmacogenomics chapter. **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Active serious bleeding (e.g., GI, intracranial hemorrhage) **WARNINGS** Bleeding risk (stop 5 days prior to elective surgery), do not use with omeprazole or esomeprazole (see P2Y12 Drug Interactions), premature discontinuation (↑ risk of thrombosis), thrombotic thrombocytopenic purpura (TTP) **SIDE EFFECTS** Generally well tolerated, unless bleeding occurs

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Prasugrel *(Effient)* Tablet Only indicated for ACS managed with PCI	LD: 60 mg PO (no later than 1 hour after PCI) MD: 10 mg PO daily with aspirin (5 mg daily if patient weighs < 60 kg) Protect from moisture; dispense in the original container	**BOXED WARNINGS** Significant, sometimes fatal, bleeding Not recommended in patients ≥ 75 years due to high bleeding risk, unless patient is considered high risk (diabetes or prior MI) Do not initiate if CABG likely, stop at least 7 days prior to elective surgery **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Active serious bleeding, history of stroke or TIA **WARNINGS** Bleeding risk, premature discontinuation (↑ risk of thrombosis), TTP **SIDE EFFECTS** Generally well tolerated, unless bleeding occurs (↑ risk than clopidogrel)
Ticagrelor *(Brilinta)* Tablet	LD: 180 mg MD: 90 mg PO BID for 1 year, then 60 mg BID Tablets can be crushed and mixed with water (to swallow or give via NG tube)	**BOXED WARNINGS** Significant, sometimes fatal, bleeding After the initial aspirin dose of 162-325 mg, do not exceed a maintenance dose of 100 mg daily because higher daily doses reduce the effectiveness of ticagrelor Avoid use if CABG likely, stop 5 days before any surgery **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Active serious bleeding, history of intracranial hemorrhage **WARNINGS** Bleeding risk, severe hepatic impairment, bradyarrhythmias, premature discontinuation (↑ risk of thrombosis), TTP **SIDE EFFECTS** Bleeding, dyspnea (> 10%), ↑ SCr, ↑ uric acid
Cangrelor *(Kengreal)* Injection Only indicated as an adjunct to PCI in patients who are P2Y12 inhibitor naïve and not receiving a GPIIb/IIIa inhibitor	30 mcg/kg IV bolus prior to PCI, then 4 mcg/kg/min IV infusion for 2 hours or for the duration of the procedure (whichever is longer)	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Significant active bleeding **SIDE EFFECTS** Bleeding **NOTES** Effects are gone 1 hour after drug discontinuation Transition to an oral P2Y12 inhibitor after PCI

LD = loading dose, MD = maintenance dose

P2Y12 INHIBITOR DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Most drug interactions are due to additive effects when used with other drugs that ↑ bleeding risk. If an ACS patient experiences bleeding while on a P2Y12 inhibitor, it should be managed without discontinuing the P2Y12 inhibitor, if possible. Stopping the P2Y12 inhibitor (particularly within the first few months after ACS) ↑ the risk of subsequent cardiovascular events.
  - ☐ NSAIDs, warfarin, SSRIs and SNRIs increase bleeding risk. See the Drug Interactions chapter.
- Clopidogrel: avoid in combination with the CYP2C19 inhibitors esomeprazole and omeprazole due to the risk of a decreased antiplatelet effect. Use caution with other CYP2C19 inhibitors.
- Ticagrelor is a major CYP3A4 substrate; avoid use with strong CYP3A4 inhibitors or inducers (see the Drug Interactions chapter). Avoid simvastatin and lovastatin doses greater than 40 mg/day.
- Monitor digoxin levels with initiation or change in dose of ticagrelor.
- Clopidogrel increases the effects of repaglinide, which can cause hypoglycemia. Avoid combination.

GLYCOPROTEIN IIB/IIIA RECEPTOR ANTAGONISTS

Eptifibatide and tirofiban have reversible blockade of the GPIIb/IIIa receptor. They are an option for medical management of ACS or patients receiving a PCI ± stent. If used in PCI, the GPIIb/IIIa receptor antagonist is given with heparin.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Eptifibatide Injection	LD: 180 mcg/kg IV bolus (max 22.6 mg), repeat bolus in 10 min if undergoing PCI MD: 2 mcg/kg/min (max 15 mg/hr) IV infusion started after the first bolus; continue for 18-24 hrs after PCI or for 12-72 hrs if no PCI CrCl < 50 mL/min: same LD, reduce MD to 1 mcg/kg/min (max 7.5 mg/hr)	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Thrombocytopenia (platelets < 100,000 cells/mm^3) History of bleeding diathesis (bleeding predisposition) Active internal bleeding Severe uncontrolled hypertension Recent major surgery or trauma (within the past 4 weeks for tirofiban and past 6 weeks for eptifibatide) History of stroke within 30 days or any history of hemorrhagic stroke (eptifibatide) **SIDE EFFECTS** Bleeding, thrombocytopenia **MONITORING** Hgb, Hct, platelets, s/sx of bleeding, renal function **NOTES** Do not shake vials Platelet function returns 4-8 hrs after drug discontinuation
Tirofiban *(Aggrastat)* Injection	LD: 25 mcg/kg IV bolus over 5 min or less MD: 0.15 mcg/kg/min IV infusion for up to 18 hrs CrCl ≤ 60 mL/min: same LD, reduce MD to 0.075 mcg/kg/min	

LD = loading dose, MD = maintenance dose

PROTEASE-ACTIVATED RECEPTOR-1 ANTAGONIST

Vorapaxar is indicated in patients with a history of MI or peripheral arterial disease (PAD) to reduce thrombotic cardiovascular events (e.g., CV death, MI, stroke). It was used with aspirin and/or clopidogrel in clinical trials.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Vorapaxar *(Zontivity)* Tablet	2.08 mg (one tablet) PO daily	**BOXED WARNING** Bleeding risk (including ICH and fatal bleeding); do not use if history of stroke, TIA, ICH or active serious bleeding **WARNING** Do not use in severe liver impairment **SIDE EFFECTS** Bleeding, anemia

VORAPAXAR DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Vorapaxar is a substrate of CYP3A4 and an inhibitor of P-gp. Avoid use with strong CYP3A4 inhibitors or inducers.

FIBRINOLYTICS

These medications cause fibrinolysis (clot breakdown) by binding to fibrin and converting plasminogen to plasmin. Fibrinolytics are used only for STEMI. When fibrinolytic therapy is used, it should be given within 30 minutes of hospital arrival (door-to-needle time) to improve survival. In the absence of contraindications, and when PCI is not available, fibrinolytic therapy is reasonable in patients with STEMI who are still symptomatic 12 – 24 hours after symptom onset.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Alteplase *(Activase)* Recombinant tissue plasminogen activator (tPA, rtPA)* ***Cathflo Activase*** (single-use 2 mg vial) used to restore function of potentially clotted central lines and devices	Accelerated Infusion > 67 kg: 100 mg IV over 1.5 hrs, given as a 15 mg bolus, 50 mg over 30 min, then 35 mg over 1 hr ≤ 67 kg: 15 mg bolus, 0.75 mg/kg (max 50 mg) over 30 min, then 0.5 mg/kg (max 35 mg) over 1 hr (max 100 mg total)	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Active internal bleeding or bleeding diathesis History of recent stroke Any prior intracranial hemorrhage (ICH) Recent intracranial or intraspinal surgery or trauma (in the last 2-3 months) Intracranial neoplasm, arteriovenous malformation or aneurysm Severe uncontrolled hypertension (unresponsive to emergency therapy) **SIDE EFFECTS** Bleeding (including ICH) **MONITORING** Hgb, Hct, s/sx of bleeding **NOTES** Alteplase contraindications and dosing differ when used for ischemic stroke (refer to the Stroke chapter)
Tenecteplase *(TNKase)*	Single IV bolus dose: < 60 kg: 30 mg 60-69 kg: 35 mg 70-79 kg: 40 mg 80-89 kg: 45 mg ≥ 90 kg: 50 mg	
Reteplase *(Retavase)*	2 dose regimen: 10 units IV, followed by 10 units IV given 30 minutes later	

**The abbreviation "tPA" is prone to errors; though it is used commonly, it is not recommended by ISMP.*

SECONDARY PREVENTION AFTER ACS

ACS is included in the definition of atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease (ASCVD), discussed in the Dyslipidemia chapter. Taking the right medications after an ACS can reduce the risk of complications (e.g., heart failure) or future events. Many of the recommended medications will be taken indefinitely (see Study Tip Gal).

DRUGS FOR SECONDARY PREVENTION AFTER ACS

Aspirin

- Indefinitely (typically 81 mg per day), unless contraindicated

P2Y12 Inhibitor*

- Medical management: ticagrelor or clopidogrel with aspirin 81 mg for at least 12 months
- PCI-treated (including stents): ticagrelor or prasugrel with aspirin 81 mg for at least 12 months
  - If high bleeding risk, can transition to ticagrelor monotherapy or de-escalate DAPT (i.e., switch from ticagrelor or prasugrel to clopidogrel) ≥ 1 month post PCI
  - Continuation of DAPT beyond 12 months may be considered if tolerating DAPT and not at high risk of bleeding

Nitroglycerin

- Indefinitely (SL tablets or spray PRN)

Beta-Blocker

- 3 years; continue indefinitely in patients with heart failure or if needed for management of hypertension

ACE Inhibitor

- Indefinitely if EF < 40%, hypertension, CKD or diabetes; consider for all MI patients without contraindications

Aldosterone Antagonist (see Chronic Heart Failure chapter)

- Indefinitely in patients with EF ≤ 40% and symptomatic heart failure or diabetes receiving target doses of an ACE inhibitor and beta-blocker
- Contraindications: renal impairment (SCr > 2.5 mg/dL in male, > 2 mg/dL in female) or hyperkalemia (K > 5 mEq/L)

Statin (see Dyslipidemia chapter)

- Indefinitely; high-intensity statin for most patients

**In a patient with a STEMI that received fibrinolytics, clopidogrel is the guideline-recommended P2Y12 inhibitor. After PCI, if long-term anticoagulation is needed, discontinue aspirin and continue P2Y12 monotherapy (preferably clopidogrel) with oral anticoagulation after 1–4 weeks of triple antithrombotic therapy.*

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- Pain relief: patients with chronic musculoskeletal pain should use acetaminophen, nonacetylated salicylates, tramadol or low-dose narcotics before considering the use of NSAIDs. If these options are insufficient, it is reasonable to use nonselective NSAIDs such as naproxen (lowest CV risk). COX-2 selective NSAIDs have high CV risk and should be avoided.
- ACS + atrial fibrillation (AF): dual or triple antithrombotic therapy can be used in patients who require anticoagulation for AF and DAPT after PCI with a stent. If using triple therapy, use it for the shortest time possible. Clopidogrel is the preferred P2Y12 inhibitor for triple therapy and a transition to dual therapy (anticoagulant + P2Y12 inhibitor) can be considered after 4 – 6 weeks. Proton pump inhibitors should be prescribed in any patient with a history of GI bleeding while taking triple antithrombotic therapy.
- Lifestyle counseling should include smoking cessation, managing chronic conditions (such as hypertension and diabetes), avoiding excessive alcohol intake, encouraging physical exercise and a healthy diet.

KEY COUNSELING POINTS

Refer to the Stable Angina chapter for patient counseling on aspirin, nitrates and clopidogrel.

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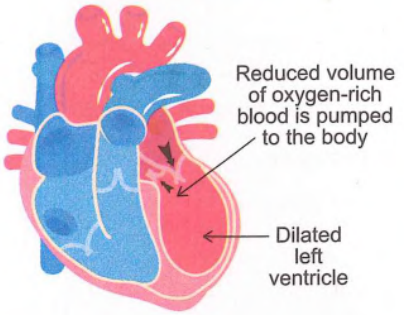

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CARDIOVASCULAR CONDITIONS

CHAPTER 31

CHRONIC HEART FAILURE

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= Study Tip Gal = Key Drugs Guy

BACKGROUND

Heart failure (HF) is a common condition in the U.S., especially in older adults, and is the primary diagnosis for over 1 million hospitalizations each year. Heart "failure" occurs when the heart is unable to supply sufficient oxygen-rich blood to the body. This can either be due to an impaired ability of the left ventricle (the main pumping chamber of the heart) to fill with blood during diastole (relaxation) or eject blood during systole (contraction).

HF is commonly caused by ischemic (e.g., MI) or non-ischemic (e.g., chronic, uncontrolled hypertension) conditions. Less common causes include valvular disease, excessive alcohol intake, illicit drug use, congenital heart defects, viral infections, diabetes and cardiotoxic drugs/chest radiation.

DIAGNOSIS

HF signs and symptoms (see Study Tip Gal below) are usually related to fluid overload, which commonly presents as edema, and low blood volume (or oxygen) delivery to organs. "Left-sided" symptoms mostly result from backed-up fluid in the heart and lungs due to left ventricular failure, whereas "right-sided" symptoms mostly result from backed-up fluid in the periphery/systemic circulation due to right ventricular failure.

Patients can fluctuate between periods of stability and exacerbation (increased symptoms), which can result in hospitalization and reduced quality of life.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF HEART FAILURE

Labs/Biomarkers

↑ BNP (B-type natriuretic peptide): normal is < 100 pg/mL

↑ NT-proBNP (N-terminal proBNP): normal is < 300 pg/mL

BNP and proBNP are used to distinguish between cardiac and non-cardiac causes of dyspnea

Left-Sided Signs and Symptoms

Orthopnea: shortness of breath (SOB) when lying flat

Paroxysmal nocturnal dyspnea (PND): nocturnal cough and SOB

Bibasilar rales: crackling sounds heard on lung exam

S3 gallop: an extra, abnormal heart sound

Hypoperfusion (e.g., renal impairment, cool extremities)

General Signs and Symptoms

Dyspnea (SOB at rest or during exertion)

Cough

Fatigue, weakness

Reduced exercise capacity

Right-Sided Signs and Symptoms

Peripheral edema

Ascites (abdominal fluid accumulation)

Jugular venous distention (JVD)

Hepatojugular reflux (HJR): neck vein distention (JVD) from pressure placed on the abdomen

Hepatomegaly (enlarged liver)

EJECTION FRACTION

An ultrasound of the heart (echocardiography or echo) is performed when HF is suspected. It provides an estimate of left ventricular ejection fraction (LVEF), or the percentage of blood pumped out of the left ventricle with each contraction. An EF < 40% indicates systolic dysfunction, or heart failure with reduced ejection fraction (HFrEF). HFrEF is the focus of this chapter, since it has well-defined treatment guidelines. Evidence-based treatments for other types of HF are included as appropriate.

LVEF	TERM	PRIMARY PROBLEM
55-70%	Normal	Normal
≥ 50%	Heart Failure with Preserved EF (HFpEF) Diastolic Dysfunction	Impaired ventricular relaxation and filling during diastole
41-49%	Heart Failure with Mildly Reduced EF (HFmrEF)	Likely mixed systolic and diastolic dysfunction
≤ 40%	Heart Failure with Reduced EF (HFrEF) Systolic Dysfunction	Impaired ability to eject blood during systole
≤ 40% at baseline but improves to > 40%	Heart Failure with Improved EF (HFimpEF)	EF improved with treatment, which should be continued despite higher EF

CLASSIFICATION SYSTEMS

The American College of Cardiology and the American Heart Association (ACC/AHA) recommend categorizing patients by HF stage (see table below). The staging system is used to guide treatment in order to slow the progression of structural heart disease [e.g., left ventricular hypertrophy (LVH), low EF] in asymptomatic (stages A and B) and symptomatic (stages C and D) patients.

HF can also be classified based on limitations in physical functioning using the New York Heart Association (NYHA) classification system.

ACC/AHA STAGING SYSTEM		NYHA FUNCTIONAL CLASS	
A	At risk for HF, but without symptoms, structural heart disease or elevated biomarkers. Examples: patients with hypertension, ASCVD or diabetes.	No corresponding category.	
B	Pre-HF; structural heart disease and/or elevated biomarkers, but without HF signs or symptoms. Examples: patients with LVH, low EF, valvular disease.	I	No limitations of physical activity. Ordinary physical activity does not cause HF symptoms (e.g., fatigue, palpitations, dyspnea).
Clinical Diagnosis of HF			
C	Structural heart disease with prior or current symptoms of HF. Example: patient with known structural heart disease (e.g., LVH) plus shortness of breath, fatigue and reduced exercise tolerance.	I	No limitations of physical activity. Ordinary physical activity does not cause HF symptoms.
		II	Slight limitation of physical activity. Comfortable at rest, but ordinary physical activity (e.g., walking up stairs) results in HF symptoms.
		III	Marked limitation of physical activity. Comfortable at rest but minimal exertion (e.g., bathing, dressing) causes HF symptoms.
		IV	Unable to perform physical activity without HF symptoms, or HF symptoms occur at rest (e.g., SOB while sitting in a chair).
D	Advanced (refractory) HF with severe symptoms or recurrent hospitalizations despite maximal treatment.	IV	Unable to perform physical activity without HF symptoms, or HF symptoms occur at rest (e.g., SOB while sitting in a chair).

PATHOPHYSIOLOGY

TERMINOLOGY

Cardiac output (CO) is the volume of blood pumped by the heart in one minute. It is determined by heart rate (HR) and stroke volume (SV), or the volume of blood ejected from the left ventricle during one complete heartbeat. SV depends on preload (blood volume returning to the heart), afterload (degree of peripheral vasoconstriction, or systemic vascular resistance) and cardiac contractility.

$$CO = HR \times SV$$

COMPENSATORY MECHANISMS

HFrEF is a low cardiac output state. The body compensates by activating neurohormonal pathways to increase blood volume or the force or speed of contractions. This can temporarily increase CO, but chronically leads to myocyte damage and cardiac remodeling, such as changes in the size, composition and shape of the heart (e.g., hypertrophy, dilatation).

The neurohormonal pathways activated include the renin-angiotensin-aldosterone system (RAAS), the sympathetic nervous system (SNS) and vasopressin (see Drug Treatment section). The neurohormones (e.g., natriuretic peptides) that normally counteract these systems become insufficient.

RAAS AND VASOPRESSIN ACTIVATION

- Renin converts angiotensinogen to angiotensin I.
- Angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) converts angiotensin I to angiotensin II.
- Angiotensin II causes systemic vasoconstriction and stimulates the release of aldosterone from the adrenal gland and vasopressin from the pituitary gland.
- Aldosterone causes sodium and water retention and increases potassium excretion.
- Vasopressin causes vasoconstriction and water retention.

SNS ACTIVATION

- Norepinephrine (NE) and epinephrine (Epi) release cause an increase in HR, contractility (positive inotropy) and vasoconstriction.

DRUG-INDUCED HEART FAILURE

Most drugs that cause or worsen HF cause fluid retention, increase blood pressure or have negative inotropic effects (see Key Drugs Guy below).

DRUGS THAT CAUSE OR WORSEN HEART FAILURE

Remember: It's the **D**rug **I**nformation **NATION**

Dipeptidyl peptidase 4 (DPP-4) inhibitors
- ☐ Alogliptin, saxagliptin

Immunosuppressants
- ☐ TNF inhibitors (e.g., adalimumab, etanercept)

Non-dihydropyridine CCBs
- ☐ Diltiazem and verapamil

Antiarrhythmics
- ☐ Class I drugs (e.g., flecainide) and dronedarone
- ☐ Amiodarone and dofetilide are preferred in HF

Thiazolidinediones

Itraconazole

Oncology drugs
- ☐ Anthracyclines (e.g., doxorubicin), trastuzumab

NSAIDs

LIFESTYLE MANAGEMENT

Patients with HF should be provided with an action plan (see example at end of chapter). Key instructions include to:

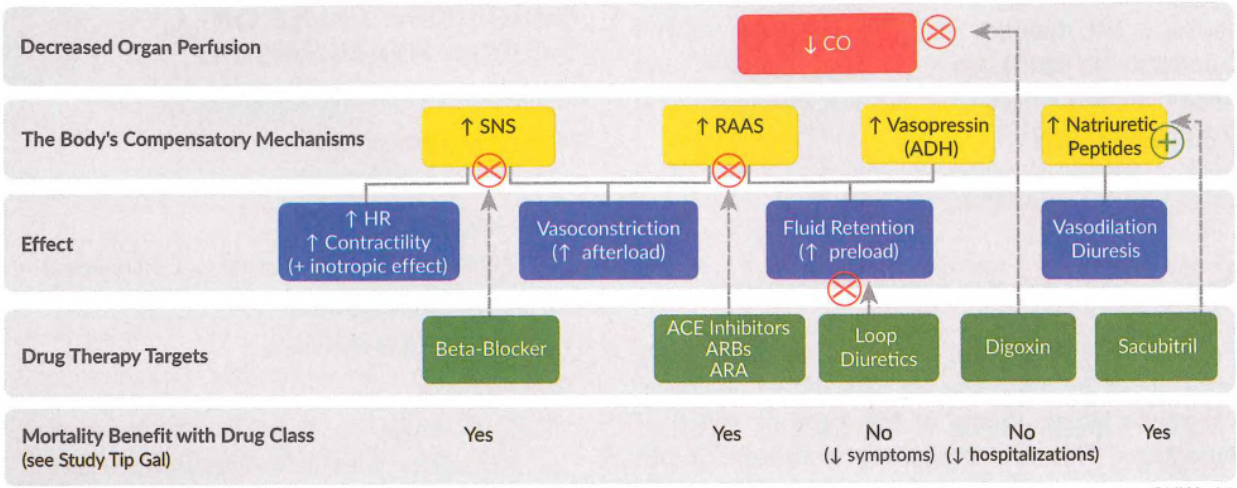
- Monitor and document body weight daily.
- Notify the provider if symptoms worsen or weight ↑ by 2 – 4 pounds in 1 day or ≥ 5 pounds in 1 week.
- Avoid excessive sodium intake. Consider restricting to < 1,500 mg/day in those with hypertension.
- Stop smoking, limit alcohol intake, avoid illicit drugs.
- Exercise (if able), reduce weight (if appropriate), and obtain recommended vaccines for adults (see Immunizations chapter).

NATURAL PRODUCTS

- Omega-3 fatty acid (fish oil) supplementation is reasonable to ↓ mortality and CV hospitalizations.
- Hawthorn and coenzyme Q10 may improve HF symptoms.

DRUG TREATMENT

The diagram below reviews the pathophysiology and neurohormonal targets for select drugs used to treat HF, and the Study Tip Gal below describes the recommended guideline-directed medical therapy (GDMT) that ↓ HFrEF morbidity and mortality. As tolerated, first-line treatments should be titrated to target doses that demonstrated benefit in clinical studies. Medications may be started simultaneously (at low doses) or sequentially (without achieving target doses before initiating the next medication).



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HFrEF TREATMENT

First-line mortality-reducing treatment, recommended for all patients

- **Angiotensin receptor and neprilysin inhibitor (ARNI), ACE inhibitor or angiotensin receptor blocker (ARB)**
  - ARNI is preferred over an ACE inhibitor or ARB
- **Beta-blocker (BB)**
  - Select agents only (not a class effect)
- **Sodium-glucose cotransporter 2 (SGLT2) inhibitor**
  - Must meet eGFR criteria for use
- **Aldosterone receptor antagonist (ARA)**
  - Must meet eGFR and potassium criteria for use

Additional medications, add on in select patients

- **Loop diuretics**
  - ↓ symptoms (not mortality) by ↓ blood volume, which ↓ edema and congestion
- **Hydralazine/isosorbide dinitrate**
  - ↓ morbidity and mortality in self-identified Black patients who remain symptomatic on optimized (i.e., titrated to target doses) first-line medications; can be considered for patients who cannot tolerate a RAAS inhibitor
- **Ivabradine**
  - ↓ risk of hospitalization and CV death (must meet heart rate and rhythm criteria for use)
- **Digoxin**
  - ↓ symptoms and cardiac hospitalizations (not mortality) by ↑ cardiac output
- **Vericiguat**
  - ↓ risk of hospitalization and CV death after recent HF hospitalization or need for IV diuretics

OTHER TYPES OF HEART FAILURE

Patients with HFimpEF (i.e., baseline LVEF ≤ 40% but improves to > 40% with treatment) should continue GDMT to prevent relapse, even if they become asymptomatic.

In patients with HFmrEF (LVEF 41 – 49%) or HFpEF (LVEF ≥ 50%), SGLT2 inhibitors are recommended as they have demonstrated benefit in decreasing HF hospitalizations and cardiovascular mortality. Other treatments (e.g., ARNI/ACE inhibitor/ARB, BB, ARA, PRN diuretics) can also be considered, especially if LVEF is on the lower end of the spectrum (for each category) or they are needed to control comorbid conditions that can exacerbate HF (e.g., hypertension, heart rate control in atrial fibrillation).

RENIN-ANGIOTENSIN-ALDOSTERONE SYSTEM INHIBITORS

An ARNI, ACE inhibitor or ARB is recommended first line in all HF patients regardless of symptom severity. They ↓ RAAS activation (see specific mechanisms in the sections that follow), resulting in ↓ preload and afterload. They also ↓ cardiac remodeling, improve left ventricular function and ↓ morbidity and mortality. The clinical benefits are a class effect (i.e., any drug in the class can be used). Other important points include:

- Do not use more than one RAAS inhibitor due to an ↑ risk of hyperkalemia and renal insufficiency (especially when combined with an ARA).
- ACE inhibitors and sacubitril (a neprilysin inhibitor) can cause angioedema because they increase bradykinin levels. ARBs have a lower risk of angioedema because they do not increase bradykinin levels; healthcare providers can therefore make a clinical judgment to prescribe them to patients with a history of angioedema. However, for testing purposes, an ACE inhibitor, ARB or ARNI should be avoided in patients with a history of angioedema.

ANGIOTENSIN RECEPTOR AND NEPRILYSIN INHIBITOR

A neprilysin inhibitor (sacubitril) combined with an ARB (valsartan) is preferred over an ACE inhibitor or ARB due to improved outcomes. Neprilysin is an enzyme that degrades several beneficial vasodilatory peptides (e.g., natriuretic peptides, adrenomedullin, substance P, bradykinin) that counteract the effects of the RAAS by causing vasodilation and diuresis.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Sacubitril/ Valsartan *(Entresto)* Tablet	Start: 24/26 mg BID If previously taking a moderate-high dose ACE inhibitor or ARB: start 49/51 mg BID Target dose: 97/103 mg BID 36-hour washout required when switching between an ACE inhibitor and ARNI No washout required when switching between an ARB and ARNI; take the first sacubitril/valsartan dose when the next ARB dose was due	**BOXED WARNING** Can cause injury and death to the developing fetus when used in the 2nd and 3rd trimesters; discontinue as soon as pregnancy is detected **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Do not use if history of angioedema Do not use with or within 36 hours of an ACE inhibitor Do not use with aliskiren in diabetes **WARNINGS** Angioedema, hyperkalemia, renal impairment (↑ risk with bilateral renal artery stenosis), hypotension/dizziness [↑ risk if volume-depleted (e.g., concurrent diuretic use)] **SIDE EFFECTS** See warnings; can also cause cough (due to increased bradykinin) **MONITORING** BP, K, renal function (SCr), s/sx of HF, angioedema

ACE INHIBITORS AND ANGIOTENSIN RECEPTOR BLOCKERS

ACE inhibitors block the conversion of angiotensin I to angiotensin II, and ARBs block angiotensin II from binding to the angiotensin II type-1 (AT1) receptor. Both result in ↓ vasoconstriction and ↓ aldosterone secretion. ACE inhibitors also block the degradation of bradykinin, which can contribute to the side effects of cough and angioedema.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
ACE Inhibitors – only those mentioned in the guidelines (see complete list in Hypertension chapter)		
Captopril	Start 6.25 mg TID, 1 hr before meals Target dose: 50 mg TID	**BOXED WARNING** Can cause injury and death to the developing fetus when used in the 2nd and 3rd trimesters; discontinue as soon as pregnancy is detected **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Do not use if history of angioedema Do not use with or within 36 hours of sacubitril/valsartan Do not use with aliskiren in diabetes **WARNINGS** Angioedema Hyperkalemia Renal impairment (↑ risk with bilateral renal artery stenosis) Hypotension/dizziness [↑ risk if volume-depleted (e.g., concurrent diuretic use)] **SIDE EFFECTS** See warnings; can also cause cough, headache **MONITORING** BP, K, renal function (SCr), s/sx of HF, angioedema
Enalapril *(Vasotec,* *Epaned* oral solution)	Start 2.5 mg PO BID Target dose: 10-20 mg PO BID	
Fosinopril	Start 5-10 mg daily Target dose: 40 mg daily	
Lisinopril *(Zestril,* *Qbrelis* oral solution)	Start 2.5-5 mg daily Target dose: 20-40 mg daily	
Perindopril	Start 2 mg daily Target dose: 8-16 mg daily	
Quinapril *(Accupril)*	Start 5 mg BID Target dose: 20 mg BID	
Ramipril *(Altace)*	Start 1.25-2.5 mg daily Target dose: 10 mg daily	
Trandolapril	Start 1 mg daily Target dose: 4 mg daily	
ARBs – only those mentioned in the guidelines (see complete list in Hypertension chapter)		
Candesartan *(Atacand)*	Start 4-8 mg daily Target dose: 32 mg daily	Same as ACE inhibitors except: No cough Less angioedema No washout period required with sacubitril/valsartan
Losartan *(Cozaar)*	Start 25-50 mg daily Target dose: 50-150 mg daily	
Valsartan *(Diovan)*	Start 40 mg BID Target dose: 160 mg BID	

ARNI, ACE INHIBITOR AND ARB DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Risk of hyperkalemia; use caution with other drugs that ↑ potassium (e.g., potassium-sparing diuretics). Avoid salt substitutes that contain potassium.
- Must have a 36-hour washout period when switching between an ACE inhibitor and ARNI. No washout needed if switching between an ARB and ARNI.
- Do not use more than one RAAS inhibitor together (e.g., ACE inhibitor + ARB or ARNI) due to ↑ risk of renal impairment, hypotension and hyperkalemia.
- Use with NSAIDs can ↑ the risk of renal impairment (especially if elderly, volume depleted or impaired baseline renal function).
- Can ↓ lithium renal clearance and ↑ risk of lithium toxicity.

BETA-BLOCKERS

Beta-blockers antagonize the effects of catecholamines (especially NE) at beta-1, beta-2 and/or alpha-1 adrenergic receptors. They improve cardiac function and ↓ morbidity and mortality. Beta-blockers are recommended first line for all HF patients, but their benefits are not considered a class effect; only bisoprolol, carvedilol (IR and CR) or metoprolol succinate ER should be used.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Beta-1 Selective Blockers		
Metoprolol succinate extended release ***Toprol XL*** Tablet *Kapspargo Sprinkle* Capsule Metoprolol tartrate *(Lopressor)* is not recommended	Start 12.5-25 mg daily Target dose: 200 mg daily	**BOXED WARNING** Do not discontinue abruptly (especially in CHD/IHD); gradually taper over 1-2 weeks to avoid acute tachycardia, hypertension and ischemia **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Severe bradycardia, 2nd/3rd degree AV block or sick sinus syndrome (unless permanent pacemaker is in place), cardiac failure or shock **WARNINGS** Use caution in diabetes; can worsen hypoglycemia and mask hypoglycemic symptoms (see Diabetes chapter) Use caution with bronchospastic diseases (e.g., asthma, COPD) Use caution with Raynaud's/other peripheral vascular diseases Can mask signs of hyperthyroidism (e.g., tachycardia) **SIDE EFFECTS** Bradycardia, hypotension, CNS effects (e.g., fatigue, dizziness, depression), impotence, cold extremities (can exacerbate Raynaud's) **MONITORING** HR, BP, s/sx of HF **NOTES** Metoprolol IV is not equivalent to PO (IV:PO ratio 1:2.5) Metoprolol succinate can be cut in half (do no crush or chew); take with or immediately after meals Extended-release capsule can be opened and contents sprinkled on a teaspoonful of soft food (e.g., applesauce, yogurt or pudding)
Bisoprolol	Start 1.25 mg daily Target dose: 10 mg daily	
Non-Selective Beta-Blocker and Alpha-1 Blocker		
Carvedilol ***Coreg*** Tablet ***Coreg CR*** Extended-release capsule	**Immediate release** Start 3.125 mg BID Target dose: ≤ 85 kg: 25 mg BID > 85 kg: 50 mg BID **Controlled release** Start 10 mg daily Target dose: 80 mg daily	Same as beta-1 selective blockers plus: **CONTRAINDICATION** Severe hepatic impairment, bronchial asthma **WARNING** Intraoperative floppy iris syndrome has occurred in cataract surgery patients taking or previously treated with an alpha-1 blocker **SIDE EFFECTS** Edema, weight gain **NOTES** Take with food to ↓ absorption rate and orthostatic hypotension risk Carvedilol CR: swallow whole; if needed, the capsule can be opened and the contents sprinkled on a spoonful of applesauce Carvedilol CR bioavailability is lower than IR; dose conversions are not 1:1 (e.g., IR 3.125 mg BID = CR 10 mg daily)

BETA-BLOCKER DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Can enhance the hypoglycemic effects of insulin and sulfonylureas and can mask some symptoms of hypoglycemia (e.g., shakiness, palpitations, anxiety).
- Use caution with other drugs that ↓ HR (e.g., digoxin, verapamil, diltiazem, amiodarone).
- Carvedilol and metoprolol are CYP450 2D6 substrates that can interact with CYP2D6 inhibitors or inducers.
- Carvedilol inhibits P-gp and can ↑ concentrations of P-gp substrates (e.g., digoxin, cyclosporine, dabigatran, ranolazine).

SODIUM-GLUCOSE COTRANSPORTER 2 INHIBITORS

The mechanism by which sodium-glucose cotransporter 2 (SGLT2) inhibitors ↓ mortality and hospitalizations in the treatment of HF is not well defined but is likely related to reduced sodium reabsorption, diuresis and a decrease in preload and/or afterload. Either of the following SGLT2 inhibitors are recommended first line for all patients with HF (note these have a fixed dose that does not require titration):

- Dapagliflozin *(Farxiga)* 10 mg PO daily
- Empagliflozin *(Jardiance)* 10 mg PO daily

In addition, a dual SGLT1/2 inhibitor [sotagliflozin *(Inpefa)]* is indicated to ↓ CV death, hospitalization and urgent visits in patients with HF.

Warnings and side effects for SGLT2 inhibitors are discussed in detail in the Diabetes chapter; generally, they should not be initiated for HF if eGFR < 20 – 25 mL/min/1.73 m^2 (cutoffs are medication-specific).

ALDOSTERONE RECEPTOR ANTAGONISTS

Aldosterone receptor antagonists (ARAs) compete with aldosterone at receptor sites in the distal convoluted tubule and collecting ducts of the nephron. They ↓ sodium and water retention, cardiac remodeling and the risk of sudden cardiac death. ARAs ↓ morbidity and mortality and should be used first line in all patients with HF. Spironolactone is non-selective; it also blocks androgen and exhibits endocrine side effects. Eplerenone is selective and does not exhibit endocrine side effects.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Spironolactone ***Aldactone*** Tablet *CaroSpir* Oral suspension	Start 12.5-25 mg daily Target dose: 25-50 mg daily *CaroSpir:* start 10-20 mg daily; may ↑ to 37.5 mg daily	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Hyperkalemia, severe renal impairment, Addison disease (spironolactone), taking strong CYP3A4 inhibitors (eplerenone) **WARNINGS** Do not initiate for HF if K ≥ 5 mEq/L, CrCl (eGFR) ≤ 30 or SCr > 2.0 mg/dL (females) or SCr > 2.5 mg/dL (males) **SIDE EFFECTS** Hyperkalemia (↑ risk if renal impairment), dizziness, hyperchloremic metabolic acidosis (rare) Spironolactone: gynecomastia, breast tenderness, impotence, irregular menses, amenorrhea Eplerenone: ↑ TGs **MONITORING** BP, K, renal function, fluid status, s/sx of HF **NOTES** Oral suspension is not therapeutically equivalent to tablets (doses > 100 mg can cause supratherapeutic levels; use tablets only for doses > 100 mg)
Eplerenone *(Inspra)* Tablet	Start 25 mg daily Target dose: 50 mg daily	

ARA DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Risk of hyperkalemia; use caution with other drugs that ↑ potassium (e.g., RAAS inhibitors).
- Do not use triple combination (e.g., ACE inhibitor + ARB or ARNI + ARA) due to an ↑ risk of hyperkalemia and renal insufficiency.
- Eplerenone is a major substrate of CYP3A4. Do not use with strong CYP3A4 inhibitors (e.g., clarithromycin, cobicistat, ritonavir, ketoconazole, itraconazole).

LOOP DIURETICS

Loop diuretics inhibit the Na-K-2Cl cotransporter in the thick ascending limb of the loop of Henle, thereby ↑ excretion of sodium, potassium, chloride, magnesium, calcium and water. The ↓ in fluid volume (↓ preload) reduces congestive symptoms, making it easier for the heart to pump, and restores euvolemia ("dry" weight).

Loop diuretics do not improve survival, but are often required for symptom control. The lowest effective dose should be used to prevent overdiuresis, which can cause dehydration, hypotension and renal impairment. If the response to loop diuretics is poor, adding a thiazide diuretic, such as metolazone, can be useful.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Furosemide *(Lasix, Furoscix)* Tablet, injection, oral solution	Oral: 20-40 mg daily or BID Max 600 mg/day	**BOXED WARNING** Can cause profound diuresis resulting in fluid and electrolyte depletion **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Anuria, hepatic coma (bumetanide and torsemide only) **WARNINGS** Sulfa allergy (not likely to cross-react – see Drug Allergies & Adverse Drug Reactions chapter); this warning does not apply to ethacrynic acid Ototoxicity including hearing loss, tinnitus and vertigo (↑ risk with ethacrynic acid or rapid IV administration) Acute kidney injury (due to excessive fluid loss) **SIDE EFFECTS** ↓ electrolytes: Na, K, Cl, Mg, Ca (different than thiazides which ↑ Ca) ↑ electrolytes/labs: HCO3 (metabolic alkalosis), UA, BG, TGs, total cholesterol Orthostatic hypotension, photosensitivity, myalgias **MONITORING** Renal function, fluid status (input/output, weight), BP, electrolytes, s/sx of HF **NOTES** Take early in the day to avoid nocturia Furosemide injection: store at room temperature (refrigeration causes crystals to form, which may dissolve upon warming); solution must be clear, do not use if yellow in color *Furoscix* is a single-dose prefilled cartridge for use with an on-body infusor (administers drug as a SC infusion) Bumetanide and furosemide injections are light-sensitive (store in amber bottles); IV admixtures do not require light protection **Dose Conversions** Oral equivalent dosing: furosemide 40 mg = torsemide 20 mg = bumetanide 1 mg = ethacrynic acid 50 mg Furosemide IV:PO ratio 1:2 (furosemide 20 mg IV = furosemide 40 mg PO) Bumetanide and ethacrynic acid IV:PO ratio 1:1
Bumetanide *(Bumex)* Tablet, injection	Oral: 0.5-1 mg daily or BID Max 10 mg/day	
Torsemide *(Soaanz)* Tablet	Oral: 10-20 mg daily Max 200 mg/day	
Ethacrynic Acid *(Edecrin)* Tablet, injection	Oral: 50-200 mg daily Max 400 mg/day	

LOOP DIURETIC DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Avoid NSAIDs; the ↑ sodium and water retention can ↓ the effect of loop diuretics and may also cause renal impairment.
- Additive risk for ototoxicity when used with other ototoxic drugs (see the Drug Interactions chapter).
- Watch for additive diuresis and electrolyte abnormalities when used in combination with thiazide diuretics.
- Can alter lithium levels, leading to lithium toxicity or inadequate treatment.

CASE SCENARIO

A patient with an acute HF exacerbation is being treated with furosemide 40 mg IV BID. She is ready for discharge and the team wants to send her home on bumetanide. What would be an equivalent oral dose of bumetanide?

First, determine the equivalent furosemide daily oral dose based on the current total daily dose of IV furosemide.

$$\frac{80 \text{ mg IV}}{X \text{ mg PO}} = \frac{1 \text{ mg IV}}{2 \text{ mg PO}}$$

X = 160 mg PO furosemide

Then, determine the equivalent daily oral dose of bumetanide.

$$\frac{160 \text{ mg PO furosemide}}{X \text{ mg PO bumetanide}} = \frac{40 \text{ mg PO furosemide}}{1 \text{ mg PO bumetanide}}$$

X = 4 mg PO bumetanide

HYDRALAZINE/NITRATE

Hydralazine is a direct arterial vasodilator, which ↓ afterload. Nitrates (e.g., isosorbide dinitrate) ↑ the availability of nitric oxide, causing venous vasodilation and ↓ preload. The combination improves survival in HF (but to a lesser degree than RAAS inhibitors) and can be used as an alternative in patients who cannot tolerate an ARNI, ACE inhibitor or ARB. The combination product hydralazine/isosorbide dinitrate is indicated in self-identified Black patients who remain symptomatic despite optimal treatment (e.g., ARNI or ACE inhibitor or ARB + beta-blocker + ARA + SGLT2 inhibitor). There is no role for monotherapy with either hydralazine or an oral nitrate in the treatment of HF.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Hydralazine/ Isosorbide Dinitrate *(BiDil)* Tablet	Start 20/37.5 mg TID (1 tab TID) Target dose: 40/75 mg TID (2 tabs TID)	See individual components below **NOTES** No nitrate tolerance
Hydralazine Tablet, injection	Start 25-50 mg TID-QID Target dose: 300 mg/day in divided doses	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Mitral valve rheumatic heart disease, CAD **WARNING** Drug-induced lupus erythematosus (DILE – dose and duration related) **SIDE EFFECTS** Peripheral edema/headache/flushing/palpitations/reflex tachycardia, nausea/vomiting, peripheral neuritis, blood dyscrasias, hypotension **MONITORING** HR, BP, ANA titer, s/sx of HF

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Isosorbide dinitrate IR/ER *(Isordil Titradose)* Preferred formulation for systolic HF	Start 20-30 mg TID-QID Target dose: 120 mg daily in divided doses	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Do not use with PDE-5 inhibitors or riociguat **SIDE EFFECTS** Hypotension, headache, dizziness, tachyphylaxis (need 10-12 hour nitrate-free interval), syncope **MONITORING** HR, BP, s/sx of HF **NOTES** Refer to the Stable Angina and Acute & Critical Care Medicine chapters for a discussion of nitrates used for other indications

BIDIL DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Do not use with PDE-5 inhibitors (e.g., avanafil, sildenafil, tadalafil, vardenafil) or riociguat. The combination can cause severe hypotension. Refer to the Sexual Dysfunction chapter for further discussion.

IVABRADINE

Ivabradine disrupts the "funny" current (I_f) in the sinoatrial (SA) node, resulting in a decreased rate of firing and ↓ HR. Ivabradine ↓ hospitalizations for worsening HF and may also reduce CV death. It is recommended as adjunct treatment in symptomatic patients already receiving GDMT, including target or maximally-tolerated doses of beta-blockers (unless contraindicated). Criteria for use of ivabradine include a normal sinus rhythm and a resting HR ≥ 70 BPM.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Ivabradine *(Corlanor)*	Starting dose: 5 mg PO BID; after two weeks, adjust dose based on HR Maintenance dose: 2.5-7.5 mg PO BID Target resting HR between 50-60 BPM	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** ADHF, sick sinus syndrome or sinoatrial block or 3rd degree AV block (unless permanent pacemaker is in place), clinically significant hypotension or bradycardia, HR maintained exclusively by a pacemaker, severe hepatic impairment, use with strong CYP3A4 inhibitors **WARNINGS** Can cause bradycardia which can ↑ risk of QT prolongation and ventricular arrhythmias; not recommended in 2nd degree AV block ↑ risk of atrial fibrillation Fetal toxicity (females should use effective contraception) **SIDE EFFECTS** Bradycardia, hypertension, luminous phenomena (phosphenes - seeing flashes of light) **MONITORING** HR, ECG, BP

IVABRADINE DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Do not use with moderate or strong CYP3A4 inhibitors or strong CYP3A4 inducers.
- Use caution with other drugs that ↓ HR (e.g., digoxin, beta-blockers, clonidine, non-DHP CCBs, amiodarone and dexmedetomidine).

DIGOXIN

Digoxin inhibits the Na-K-ATPase pump in myocardial cells, causing a positive inotropic effect (↑ CO). It also exerts a parasympathetic effect, which slows AV nodal conduction, causing a negative chronotropic effect (↓ HR). Digoxin does not improve survival, but can ↓ HF related hospitalizations. It can be added to GDMT to improve symptoms, exercise tolerance and quality of life. Another role for digoxin is HR control in patients with atrial fibrillation (AF), HFrEF and low blood pressure.

The starting dose of digoxin is based on renal function, body mass and age; a lower dose is used in patients with renal insufficiency, lower body weight or older age. The dose is adjusted to maintain a serum concentration of 0.5 – 0.9 ng/mL in HF. Since hypokalemia and hypomagnesemia ↑ the risk for digoxin toxicity, maintain potassium between 4 – 5 mEq/L and magnesium > 2 mEq/L.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Digoxin *(Lanoxin)* Tablet, solution, injection	Typical dose: 0.125-0.25 mg PO daily Loading dose not used in HF CrCl < 60 mL/min: ↓ dose or frequency; hold in acute renal failure ↓ dose by 20-25% when switching from PO to IV **Therapeutic range (HF)** 0.5-0.9 ng/mL (higher range used for atrial fibrillation)	**CONTRAINDICATION** Ventricular fibrillation **WARNINGS** 2nd/3rd degree heart block without a pacemaker, Wolff-Parkinson-White syndrome with AF, vesicant (avoid extravasation) **SIDE EFFECTS** Dizziness, visual/mental disturbances, headache, N/V, diarrhea **MONITORING** Electrolytes, renal function, HR, ECG, BP, digoxin level (draw 12-24 hrs after dose) **TOXICITY** Symptoms: N/V, loss of appetite, abdominal pain, blurred/double vision, greenish-yellow halos (or altered color perception), confusion, delirium, bradycardia, life-threatening arrhythmias ↑ risk with hypokalemia, hypomagnesemia and hypercalcemia Hypothyroidism can ↑ digoxin levels **NOTES** Antidote: *DigiFab*

DIGOXIN DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Digoxin is a substrate of P-gp and CYP3A4 (minor). P-gp inhibitors will increase digoxin levels.
  - ☐ Reduce digoxin dose by 50% when starting amiodarone or dronedarone.
  - ☐ Use caution with concurrent administration of verapamil, cyclosporine, itraconazole, erythromycin, clarithromycin, propafenone and quinidine.
- Use caution with other drugs that ↓ HR (e.g., beta-blockers, clonidine, non-DHP CCBs, amiodarone and dexmedetomidine).

VERICIGUAT

Vericiguat is a soluble guanylate cyclase stimulator that increases cyclic GMP and leads to smooth muscle relaxation and vasodilation. It has been shown to reduce the risk of cardiovascular death and HF hospitalizations following a hospitalization for HF or need for IV diuretics. Vericiguat can be used in select patients with HFrEF who are persistently symptomatic despite optimized first-line therapies.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Vericiguat *(Verquvo)*	Initial: 2.5 mg PO daily with food; after two weeks, titrate dose as tolerated Target dose: 10 mg once daily with food	**BOXED WARNING** Do not use if pregnant; contraception required during use and for one month after stopping treatment **CONTRAINDICATION** Do not use with riociguat (another soluble guanylate cyclase stimulator) **SIDE EFFECTS** Hypotension, anemia, dyspepsia

VERICIGUAT DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Vericiguat may enhance the hypotensive effects of PDE-5 inhibitors; this combination should be avoided.
- Patients taking long-acting nitrates (e.g., isosorbide mononitrate, isosorbide dinitrate) were excluded from studies because of the potential for increased hypotension.

POTASSIUM ORAL SUPPLEMENTATION

Potassium fluctuations are common in HF due to drugs that ↓ (loop diuretics) or ↑ (RAAS inhibitors, ARAs) potassium levels. Maintenance of normal potassium levels (3.5 – 5 mEq/L) is essential to reduce the already elevated arrhythmia risk. Potassium levels should be monitored with changes in renal function or changes in diuretic, ARNI, ACE inhibitor, ARB or ARA dose. Because magnesium deficiency can aggravate hypokalemia, magnesium levels should be assessed and corrected (as needed) prior to correcting the potassium level.

Oral potassium chloride (KCl) is used most commonly when supplementation is needed, but some of the tablets and capsules are large and difficult to swallow (see Study Tip Gal and Case Scenario on the following page for alternative options). Potassium chloride injection is discussed in the Acute & Critical Care Medicine chapter.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Potassium chloride Extended-release capsules Extended-release tablets: ***K-Tab, Klor-Con, Klor-Con 10, Klor-Con M10/ M15/M20*** Oral packet: ***Klor-Con*** Oral solution: 10% (20 mEq/15 mL) 20% (40 mEq/15 mL)	**Hypokalemia prevention:** 20-40 mEq/day in 1-2 divided doses **Mild hypokalemia:** 40-100 mEq/day in 2-4 divided doses; adjust based on laboratory values No more than 40 mEq should be given as a single dose to avoid GI discomfort	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Hyperkalemia, delayed or obstructed passage through the GI tract **WARNINGS** Hyperkalemia; use caution with disorders (e.g., renal impairment, Addison disease) and medications that ↑ K **SIDE EFFECTS** Abdominal pain/cramping, diarrhea, nausea, flatulence **MONITORING** K, Mg, Cl, pH, urine output **NOTES** Take with meals and a full glass of water to ↓ GI irritation

POTASSIUM CHLORIDE: A HARD PILL TO SWALLOW

Extended-release capsules

- Capsule contents can be sprinkled on a small amount of applesauce or pudding

Extended-release tablets

- *K-Tab, Klor-Con:* swallow whole; do not chew, crush, cut or suck on the tablet
- *Klor-Con M:* if difficult to swallow whole, it can be cut in half or dissolved in water (stir for 2 minutes and drink immediately); do not chew, crush, or suck on the tablet

Oral packet

- Dissolve contents in water and drink immediately

Oral solution

- KCl 10% = 20 mEq/15 mL (see Case Scenario)
- Mix each 15 mL with 6 oz of water

CASE SCENARIO

A 76-year-old female is started on *Klor-Con* 20 mEq TID. She has difficulty swallowing the large tablets and would like to switch to something that is easier to take. How many milliliters of KCl 10% oral solution would provide the same total daily amount of potassium as the *Klor-Con* she is receiving?

First, determine the total daily dose of potassium from *Klor-Con*.

20 mEq × 3 doses/day = 60 mEq/day

Then, using the dose conversion for KCl 10% oral solution, calculate how many milliliters will provide the same total daily dose.

$$\frac{60\ \text{mEq}}{X\ \text{mL}} = \frac{20\ \text{mEq}}{15\ \text{mL}}$$

X = 45 mL of KCl 10% oral solution

See the Calculations II: Compounding chapter for additional examples

IRON REPLACEMENT THERAPY

All patients with HF should be assessed for anemia, because anemia is associated with HF disease severity and mortality. Specifically, it is recommended that patients with HFrEF and iron deficiency receive intravenous iron treatment to improve exercise capacity and quality of life (see the Anemia chapter for further discussion of iron deficiency anemia and parenteral iron treatment).

HEART FAILURE EXACERBATIONS AND QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

HF is the most common cause of hospitalization in patients greater than 65 years old. HF admissions are caused by either new-onset HF (known as acute HF) or worsening HF (known as acute decompensated HF, or ADHF). ADHF presents with either worsening congestion and/or hypoperfusion. Treatment consists of IV loop diuretics, vasodilators and/or inotropes, which are discussed in the Acute & Critical Care Medicine chapter. Many HF hospitalizations are due to nonadherence with lifestyle recommendations and/or medications (25 – 50% of patients with HF report medication nonadherence).

Avoidable HF admissions are a major cause of increased healthcare costs. Pharmacists are actively involved in quality improvement initiatives directed at decreasing hospital readmissions, such as medication optimization (ensuring the right medications are being used/appropriately titrated and harmful medications are not being used) and medication adherence strategies.

In addition, patients need to know what steps to take if their HF symptoms worsen in order to avoid hospital admission (see the sample HF action plan on the following page).

CHRONIC HEART FAILURE MANAGEMENT/ACTION PLAN

EXCELLENT JOB!

- No new or worsening shortness of breath
- Usual amount of swelling in legs
- No weight gain
- No chest pain
- No change in usual activity

Weigh yourself every day

Eat a low salt diet

Take all your medications

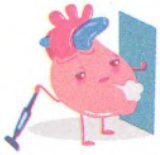
Go to your doctor appointments

BE CAREFUL!

Weight gain of:
- 2-4 pounds in 1 day
- More than 5 pounds in 1 week

Increased number of pillows to sleep

Increased swelling (in abdomen and/or extremities) or coughing



Shortness of breath with activity

You may need to change your medications (e.g., double the dose of your loop diuretic)

Call your doctor for instructions

WARNING!

Weight gain of more than 5 pounds in 1 week

Dizziness, confusion, sadness or depression

Unable to sleep or lay flat due to shortness of breath

Shortness of breath at rest, chest tightness or wheezing

Call your doctor <u>today</u> to report symptoms and request an appointment

<u>Call 911 if having severe chest pain</u>

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KEY COUNSELING POINTS

See the Drug Formulations and Patient Counseling chapter for counseling language/layman's terminology.

ALL PATIENTS WITH HEART FAILURE

- Monitor and record body weight daily.
- Limit salt intake. Choose foods with "no sodium added" or "low sodium." Avoid foods high in sodium, such as:
  - ☐ Prepared sauces and condiments (e.g., soy sauce, BBQ sauce, salsa)
  - ☐ Canned vegetables and soups
  - ☐ Frozen meals
  - ☐ Deli meat (e.g., sandwich meat, bacon, ham, hot dogs, sausage, salami)
  - ☐ Pickles, olives, cheese, nuts, chips
- Do not use NSAIDs (e.g., ibuprofen); they can worsen sodium and water retention and reduce the effectiveness of HF medications.

ARNI, ACE INHIBITORS AND ARBs

- Avoid in pregnancy (teratogenic).
- Can cause angioedema.
- ACE inhibitors and ARNI: tell your healthcare provider if you develop a dry, hacking cough.

BETA-BLOCKERS

- Do not suddenly stop taking this medication without consulting your healthcare provider.
- This medication can mask symptoms of low blood sugar. If you have diabetes, check your blood sugar if you notice symptoms of sweating or hunger.
- Can cause sexual dysfunction.
- Take all forms of carvedilol with food.
- Take metoprolol succinate with or immediately after meals.
- The carvedilol extended-release capsule can be opened and the contents sprinkled on a small amount of applesauce.
- The metoprolol succinate sprinkle capsule can be opened and the contents sprinkled on a teaspoonful of applesauce, yogurt or pudding.

LOOP DIURETICS

- Take this medication early in the day (no later than 4 PM) to avoid getting up at night to use the bathroom.
- Can cause orthostasis.

DIGOXIN

- Digoxin levels and kidney function will be monitored regularly.
- Avoid dehydration; an overdose can occur more easily if you are dehydrated.
- Symptoms of overdose include nausea, vomiting, decreased appetite, vision changes (e.g., blurred or yellow/green vision), confusion and delirium.
- Many drug interactions.

Select Guidelines/References

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CHAPTER 32

ARRHYTHMIAS

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= Study Tip Gal = Key Drugs Guy

BACKGROUND

The cardiac conduction system is the electrical signaling system that coordinates the heartbeat and causes the atria and ventricles to contract, which pushes blood forward.

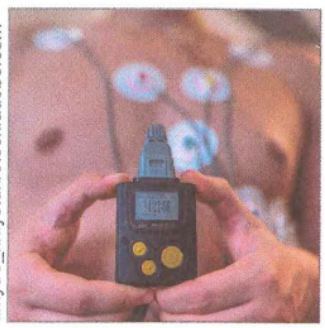
The "lub-dub" sounds (called S1 and S2) heard through auscultation (listening to the heart with a stethoscope) are made by the closing of heart valves that occur with each heartbeat and signal the beginning and end of ventricular systole (i.e., contraction). Sounds other than S1 and S2 are typically abnormal (e.g., S3, a murmur common in heart failure). Murmurs are caused by turbulent blood flow or regurgitation (i.e., blood flowing in the wrong direction).

A normal heartbeat has a relatively steady rate and a regular, coordinated rhythm. An arrhythmia is an abnormal heart rhythm, which can cause the heart to beat too slow (bradycardia) or too fast (tachycardia). Irregular electrical impulses can cause an arrhythmia, which can prevent the heart from pumping blood efficiently, and symptoms can develop.

SYMPTOMS AND DIAGNOSIS

Some arrhythmias are asymptomatic and only detected during a medical exam. With other arrhythmias, patients can feel that the heart is beating very fast ("fluttering" in the chest) or abnormally ("skipping a beat"). Other symptoms include dizziness, shortness of breath, fatigue, lightheadedness and chest pain. In severe cases, syncope (due to low cardiac output), heart failure or death can occur.

An electrocardiogram (ECG) is used to diagnose arrhythmias. An ECG machine records the electrical activity of the heart using electrodes placed on the skin. An ECG can be obtained quickly, but it only detects an arrhythmia present during the test.



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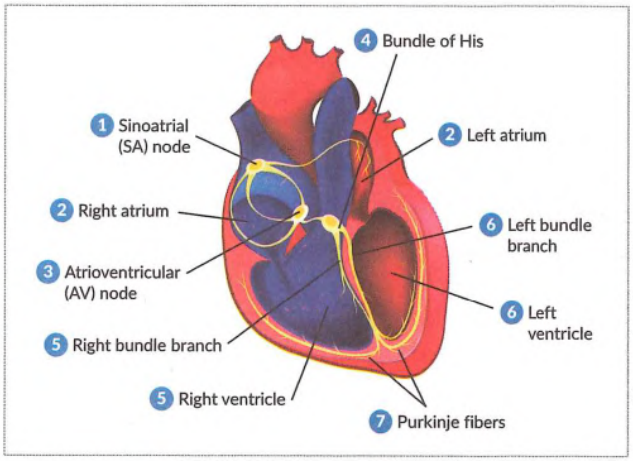
A Holter monitor (see image to the left) is an ambulatory ECG device that records continuously for 24 – 48 hours. It can detect arrhythmias that are intermittent (i.e., the heart goes in and out of normal sinus rhythm). Other monitoring devices are available, such as event monitors (which record activity during an arrhythmia), select smart watches and the *Zio* patch heart monitor.

THE CARDIAC CONDUCTION PATHWAY

The cardiac conduction pathway consists of a group of specialized cardiac cells (myocytes) that send electrical impulses (signals) to heart muscle, causing it to contract. The main components include the sinoatrial (SA) node, atrioventricular (AV) node, bundle of His, bundle branches and Purkinje fibers. The conduction pathway can be traced by following the numbers in the image below.



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1. The electrical impulse begins in the SA node, a cluster of cells at the junction of the superior vena cava and the right atrium. The SA node is the heart's natural pacemaker; the frequency of its signals determines the pace, or heart rate. A normal heart rate is 60 to 100 BPM.
2. The impulse travels from the SA node to the right and left atria, which causes the atria to contract.
3. The signal reaches the AV node, and electrical conduction slows down.
4. The impulse continues through the bundle of His and into the ventricles.
5. The bundle of His divides into the right bundle branch for the right ventricle, and
6. The left bundle branch for the left ventricle.
7. The signal spreads through the ventricles via the Purkinje fibers, which causes the ventricles to contract.

Normal sinus rhythm (NSR) has the appearance shown in the images below, with a distinct pattern for each heartbeat that consists of waves (e.g., P and T waves) and segments (e.g., the QRS complex). A disruption in the normal sequence of impulse conduction can result in an arrhythmia. For example, the SA node may fire at an abnormal rate or rhythm or damaged myocardial tissue can block or disrupt the electrical signal.

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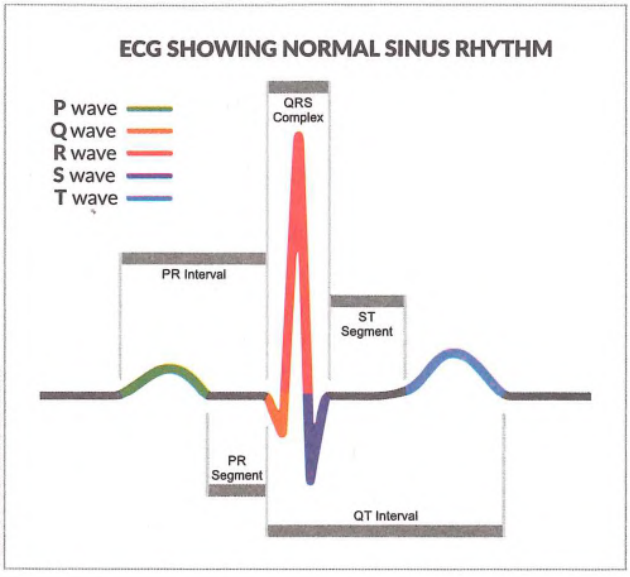

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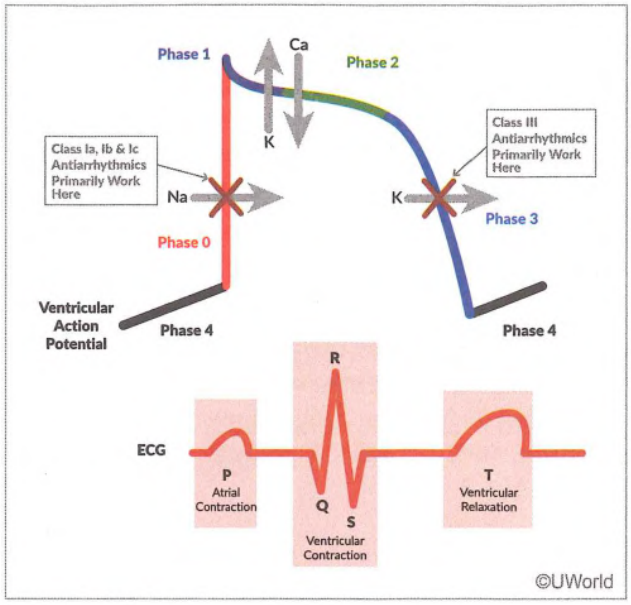
ELECTRICAL SIGNALING: THE CARDIAC ACTION POTENTIAL

The cardiac action potential refers to the movement of ions through channels in the myocytes that cause the electrical impulses in the cardiac conduction pathway. The action potentials provide the electricity needed to power the cardiac conduction pathway. The cells in the SA node (pacemaker) have automaticity, which means that, unlike other myocytes, they initiate their own action potential (i.e., spontaneously depolarize). In contrast, the action potential of a ventricular myocyte is triggered when a threshold voltage is reached. This occurs in phases (see image with Phases 0 – 4).

- Phase 0: a heartbeat starts when rapid ventricular depolarization occurs in response to an influx of sodium (Na); this causes ventricular contraction (represented by a QRS complex on ECG).
- Phase 1: early rapid repolarization (Na channels close).
- Phase 2: a plateau in response to an influx of calcium (Ca) and efflux of potassium (K).
- Phase 3: rapid ventricular repolarization occurs in response to an efflux of K; this causes ventricular relaxation (represented by the T wave on ECG).
- Phase 4: resting membrane potential is established; atrial depolarization occurs (represented by the P wave on ECG).



ARRHYTHMIAS

Abnormalities of the heart or its conduction system can alter the cardiac action potential and lead to arrhythmias. The most common cause of arrhythmias is myocardial ischemia or infarction. Other conditions resulting in damage to cardiac tissue can cause arrhythmias, including heart valve disorders, heart failure and hypertension.

Non-cardiac conditions that can trigger or predispose a patient to an arrhythmia include an electrolyte imbalance (especially potassium, magnesium, sodium and calcium), an elevated sympathetic state (e.g., hyperthyroidism, infection) and drugs (e.g., illicit drugs and drugs that prolong the QT interval).

Arrhythmias are classified into two broad categories based on the origin point: supraventricular (originating above the AV node) and ventricular (originating below the AV node). Arrhythmias originating in or just below the AV node are called junctional rhythms, which are less common.

SUPRAVENTRICULAR ARRHYTHMIAS

These include sinus tachycardia, atrial fibrillation, atrial flutter, atrial tachycardia and supraventricular re-entrant tachycardias (formerly known as paroxysmal supraventricular tachycardias). Atrial fibrillation is a common arrhythmia and discussed later in the chapter.

VENTRICULAR ARRHYTHMIAS

Common ventricular arrhythmias include premature ventricular contractions (PVCs), ventricular tachycardia and ventricular fibrillation. PVCs (also called skipped heartbeats) are relatively common and can occur in people with or without heart disease. PVCs can be related to stress or too much caffeine, nicotine or exercise.

A series of PVCs that result in a heart rate > 100 BPM is known as ventricular tachycardia (VT). Pulseless VT is a medical emergency and advanced cardiac life support (ACLS) should be initiated, whereas VT with a pulse can be treated with antiarrhythmic drugs. All untreated VT can degenerate into ventricular fibrillation, which is also a medical emergency that requires ACLS.

QT PROLONGATION & TORSADE DE POINTES

The QT interval is measured from the beginning of the QRS complex to the end of the T wave on an ECG. It reflects ventricular depolarization and repolarization and varies with heart rate (the QT interval is longer when the heart rate is slower). A QT interval can be used if the heart rate is ≤ 60 BPM; when the heart rate is > 60 BPM, a QT interval corrected for heart rate (QTc) is used. A QTc interval is considered prolonged when it is > 440 – 460 milliseconds (msec), but is more worrisome when markedly prolonged (> 500 msec). QT interval prolongation is a risk factor for Torsade de Pointes (TdP), a ventricular tachyarrhythmia that can cause sudden cardiac death.

See the Key Drugs Guy to the right for drugs that can prolong the QT interval. Some medications have recommendations to minimize the risk of QT prolongation (e.g., maximum doses of citalopram/escitalopram, avoidance of single IV doses > 16 mg of ondansetron, restricted use of droperidol).

SELECT DRUGS THAT CAN INCREASE OR PROLONG THE QT INTERVAL

Antiarrhythmics
Class Ia, Ic and III

Anti-infectives
Antimalarials (e.g., hydroxychloroquine)

Azole antifungals (all except isavuconazonium)

Macrolides

Quinolones

Lefamulin

Antidepressants
SSRIs (highest risk with citalopram and escitalopram)

Tricyclic antidepressants

Mirtazapine, trazodone, venlafaxine

Antiemetics
5-HT3 receptor antagonists (e.g., ondansetron)

Droperidol, metoclopramide, promethazine

Antipsychotics
First generation (e.g., haloperidol, chlorpromazine)

Second generation (highest risk with ziprasidone)

Oncology medications
Androgen deprivation therapy (e.g., leuprolide)

Tyrosine kinase inhibitors (e.g., nilotinib)

Arsenic trioxide

Other
Cilostazol, donepezil, fingolimod, hydroxyzine, loperamide, methadone, ranolazine, solifenacin

QT PROLONGATION RISK FACTORS

The risk of drug-induced QT prolongation increases with:

- Higher doses (risk is concentration-dependent).
- Multiple QT-prolonging drugs taken together (additive effect).
- Reduced drug clearance due to renal or liver disease or drug interactions (e.g., enzyme inhibitors).
- Electrolyte abnormalities, including hypokalemia, hypomagnesemia and hypocalcemia.
- Other cardiac conditions (e.g., heart failure).
- Female sex.

QT RISK REQUIRES ASSESSMENT

In addition to recognizing QT-prolonging drugs, assessing a patient's risk for TdP is important. For example, if low-dose amitriptyline is used for neuropathic pain, it is not particularly risky; but if this patient is admitted to the hospital with hypokalemia and started on fluconazole and ondansetron, the level of concern would be heightened.

ANTIARRHYTHMIC DRUGS

Antiarrhythmic drugs work by blocking the movement of ions in different phases of the action potentials that drive the cardiac conduction pathway. Select drugs can reduce conduction velocity and/or automaticity, or prolong the refractory period, which can slow or terminate the abnormal electrical activity causing the arrhythmia. Prior to starting any drug for a non-life-threatening arrhythmia, electrolytes and a toxicology screen should be checked to identify potentially reversible causes. All antiarrhythmic drugs have the potential to induce proarrhythmia (causing a new arrhythmia or worsening the existing one). Risk of additive proarrhythmia can be minimized by correcting electrolyte abnormalities prior to antiarrhythmic use and throughout treatment.

MECHANISM OF ACTION

The Vaughan Williams classification system splits the antiarrhythmic drugs into classes based on their dominant electrophysiological effect or mechanism of action (see the Study Tip Gal to the right); however, some drugs (e.g., amiodarone, sotalol) act via multiple mechanisms.

AMIODARONE

Amiodarone is a class III antiarrhythmic (K channel blocker) that also blocks Na and Ca channels and alpha and beta adrenergic receptors, making it useful for treating many different arrhythmias. Amiodarone is notable for a very long half-life (40 – 60 days) and a chemical structure containing iodine (see Basic Science Concepts chapter), which can impact thyroid function. Despite numerous toxicities, amiodarone is commonly prescribed and is a preferred antiarrhythmic in patients with heart failure.

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS CLASSIFICATION

CLASS I: Sodium Channel Blockers
Ia: **D**isopyramide, **Q**uinidine, **P**rocainamide

Ib: **L**idocaine, **M**exiletine

Ic: **F**lecainide, **P**ropafenone

CLASS II: Beta-Blockers

CLASS III: Potassium Channel Blockers
Dronedarone, **D**ofetilide, **S**otalol, **I**butilide, **A**miodarone

CLASS IV: Non-dihydropyridine Calcium Channel Blockers
Verapamil, **D**iltiazem

Remember:

Double **Q**uarter **P**ounder, **L**ettuce, **M**ayo, **F**ries **P**lease!

Because **D**ieting **D**uring **S**tress **I**s **A**lways **V**ery **D**ifficult

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Amiodarone *(Nexterone, Pacerone)* Tablet, injection	Pulseless VT/VF: 300 mg IV push × 1, may repeat 150 mg IV push × 1 if needed VT with pulse: 150 mg IV bolus, then 1 mg/min × 6 hrs, then 0.5 mg/min × 18 hours or longer Secondary prevention of ventricular arrhythmias: 800-1,600 mg/day × 1-3 weeks, then 600-800 mg/day × 4 weeks, then 400 mg/day AF/atrial flutter – cardioversion (off-label): 600-800 mg/day until a 10 gram loading dose is reached, then 200 mg daily AF/atrial flutter – maintenance of NSR (off-label): 400-600 mg/day for 2-4 weeks, then 100-200 mg daily	**BOXED WARNINGS** Pulmonary toxicity: check baseline chest X-ray, PFTs Hepatotoxicity: check baseline LFTs For life-threatening arrhythmias only; proarrhythmic, continuous ECG monitoring and cardiac resuscitation should be available for initiation **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Iodine hypersensitivity; sick sinus syndrome, 2nd/3rd-degree heart block, or bradycardia causing syncope (unless using artificial pacemaker); cardiogenic shock **WARNINGS** Hyper- and hypothyroidism (hypo is more common as amiodarone inhibits peripheral conversion of T4 to T3), visual impairment (optic neuropathy, corneal microdeposits), photosensitivity (blue-gray skin discoloration), neurotoxicity (peripheral neuropathy) Correct hypokalemia, hypomagnesemia, hypocalcemia prior to use Avoid in pregnancy (teratogenic) and when breastfeeding if possible **SIDE EFFECTS** Hypotension, bradycardia (may require ↓ infusion rate), photosensitivity (sun protection required), dizziness, tremor/ataxia, malaise/fatigue, nausea, drug-induced lupus erythematosus (DILE), severe skin reactions (SJS/TEN) **MONITORING** ECG, BP, HR, electrolytes LFTs every 6 months, thyroid function (TSH and free T4) and chest X-ray every 3-6 months, regular eye exams **NOTES** Oral/IV can provide rate control for AF (due to beta-blocking properties) when other measures are unsuccessful or contraindicated. **Intravenous** Infusions > 2 hours require a non-PVC container (e.g., polyolefin or glass), PVC tubing is okay Premixed IV bags: longer stability, non-PVC (e.g., *Nexterone* comes in non-PVC, non-DEHP GALAXY plastic container) Use 0.22 micron filter; central line preferable Many Y-site, additive incompatibilities including heparin (flush line with saline)

AMIODARONE DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Amiodarone can increase the level of many other drugs; it is a weak inhibitor of CYP450 2C9, 2D6, 3A4 and P-gp.
- Amiodarone is often given with drugs that it interacts with (common cardiovascular drug interactions are reviewed in the Drug Interactions chapter). When starting amiodarone:
  - ☐ ↓ digoxin by 50%, ↓ warfarin by 30 – 50% and do not exceed 20 mg/day of simvastatin or 40 mg/day of lovastatin (consider use of alternative statin).
- Additive effects when used with other drugs that decrease HR, including non-dihydropyridine calcium channel blockers, digoxin, beta-blockers, clonidine and dexmedetomidine.
- Sofosbuvir can enhance the bradycardic effect of amiodarone; do not use together.

OTHER ANTIARRHYTHMICS

Other antiarrhythmics work primarily by blocking sodium or potassium channels. Many of the drugs listed here have toxicities that limit their use, but lidocaine and adenosine are recommended in the ACLS algorithms for cardiac arrest (ventricular tachycardia/fibrillation) and tachycardia with a palpable pulse, respectively.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Class Ia Drugs Block sodium channels		
Disopyramide *(Norpace, Norpace CR)* Capsule	400-600 mg/day	**BOXED WARNING** Reserve use for patients with life-threatening ventricular arrhythmias **CONTRAINDICATIONS** 2nd/3rd-degree heart block (unless using artificial pacemaker), cardiogenic shock, congenital QT syndrome, sick sinus syndrome **WARNINGS** Proarrhythmic, hypotension, can exacerbate HF and BPH/urinary retention, narrow-angle glaucoma, myasthenia gravis (due to anticholinergic effects) **SIDE EFFECTS** Anticholinergic effects (e.g., dry mouth, constipation, urinary retention)
Quinidine Tablet	IR: 400 mg Q6H ER: 324-648 mg Q8-12H Take with food or milk to ↓ GI upset Different salt forms (IR vs ER) are not interchangeable (267 mg of gluconate = 200 mg of sulfate)	**BOXED WARNING** May ↑ mortality in treatment of AF or atrial flutter and non-life-threatening ventricular arrhythmias **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Concurrent use of quinolones that prolong the QT interval or ritonavir; 2nd/3rd-degree heart block or idioventricular conduction delays (unless using artificial pacemaker), thrombocytopenia, thrombotic thrombocytopenic purpura (TTP), myasthenia gravis **WARNINGS** Proarrhythmic, hepatotoxicity, hemolysis risk (avoid in G6PD deficiency), can cause positive Coombs test **SIDE EFFECTS** Drug-induced lupus erythematosus (DILE), diarrhea, stomach cramping, rash, lightheadedness Cinchonism (e.g., quinidine toxicity): symptoms include tinnitus, hearing loss, blurred vision, headache, delirium **NOTES** Avoid changes in Na intake; ↓ Na intake can ↑ quinidine levels Alkaline foods/alkaline urine ↑ quinidine levels and can lead to toxicity

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Procainamide Injection	Active metabolite, N-acetyl procainamide (NAPA), is renally cleared; ↓ dose when CrCl < 50 mL/min **Therapeutic levels:** Procainamide: 4-10 mcg/mL NAPA: 15-25 mcg/mL Combined: 10-30 mcg/mL Draw level 6-12 hrs after start of IV infusion	**BOXED WARNINGS** Potentially fatal blood dyscrasias (e.g., agranulocytosis); monitor closely in the first 3 months and periodically thereafter Long-term use leads to positive antinuclear antibody (ANA) in 50% of patients, which can result in drug-induced lupus erythematosus (DILE) Reserve use for patients with life-threatening ventricular arrhythmias **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Heart block, systemic lupus erythematosus, TdP **WARNINGS** Proarrhythmic **SIDE EFFECTS** Hypotension, rash **NOTES** Metabolism of procainamide to NAPA occurs by acetylation: slow acetylators are at risk for drug accumulation and toxicity; fast acetylators can have subtherapeutic drug concentrations and reduced efficacy Drug of choice for Wolff-Parkinson-White syndrome
Class Ib Drugs Block sodium channels; useful for ventricular arrhythmias only (no efficacy in AF)		
Lidocaine *(Xylocaine)* Injection	Bolus dosing: 1-1.5 mg/kg × 1, then 0.5-0.75 mg/kg every 5-10 minutes (max total dose 3 mg/kg) Continuous infusion: 1-4 mg/minute	**BOXED WARNINGS** Mexiletine: reserve use for patients with life-threatening ventricular arrhythmias, abnormal liver function seen in patients with CHF or ischemia **CONTRAINDICATIONS** 2nd/3rd-degree heart block (unless using artificial pacemaker) Lidocaine: Wolff-Parkinson-White syndrome, Adam-Stokes syndrome, allergy to corn or corn-related products or amide-type anesthetics Mexiletine: cardiogenic shock **WARNINGS** Caution in the elderly, hepatic impairment and HF Mexiletine: blood dyscrasias, severe skin reactions (DRESS), proarrhythmic **NOTES** IV lidocaine is used for refractory VT/cardiac arrest; topical/local is primarily used for numbing; see the Acute & Critical Care Medicine and Pain chapters
Mexiletine Capsule	150-300 mg Q8-12H; max 1.2 grams/day Take with food	

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Class Ic Drugs Block sodium channels		
Flecainide Tablet	50-100 mg Q12H; max 400 mg/day Store in tight, light-resistant container	**BOXED WARNINGS** When treating atrial flutter, 1:1 atrioventricular conduction may occur (i.e., rapid ventricular rate); pre-emptive negative chronotropic therapy (e.g., digoxin, beta-blockers) can ↓ the risk Proarrhythmic effects, especially in AF (do not use in chronic AF) Reserve use for patients with life-threatening ventricular arrhythmias **CONTRAINDICATIONS** 2nd/3rd-degree heart block (unless using artificial pacemaker), cardiogenic shock, structural heart disease (e.g., heart failure, myocardial infarction), concurrent use of ritonavir **WARNINGS** Avoid use in severe hepatic and renal impairment **SIDE EFFECTS** Dizziness, visual disturbances, dyspnea
Propafenone *(Rythmol SR*)* IR tablet, ER capsule	IR: 150-300 Q8H ER: 225-425 mg Q12H	**BOXED WARNINGS** Reserve use for patients with life-threatening ventricular arrhythmias **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Sinoatrial and atrioventricular disorders (unless patient has a functional artificial pacemaker), sinus bradycardia, cardiogenic shock, hypotension, structural heart disease (e.g., heart failure, myocardial infarction), bronchospastic disorders, marked electrolyte imbalances **WARNING** Proarrhythmic **SIDE EFFECTS** Taste disturbance (metallic), dizziness, visual disturbances, N/V **NOTES** Propafenone has significant beta-blocking effects, negative inotropic and proarrhythmic properties (contraindicated in HF)
Class III Drugs Primarily block potassium channels; see amiodarone discussed previously		
Dofetilide *(Tikosyn)* Capsule	500 mcg BID CrCl < 60 mL/min: ↓ dose CrCl < 20 mL/min: contraindicated	**BOXED WARNING** Must be initiated (or reinitiated) in a setting with continuous ECG monitoring, experienced staff and ability to assess CrCl for a minimum of 3 days; proarrhythmic (QT prolongation) **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Congenital or acquired long QT syndromes, prolonged QTc > 440 msec at baseline; do not use with cimetidine, dolutegravir, hydrochlorothiazide, itraconazole, ketoconazole, megestrol, prochlorperazine, trimethoprim, verapamil, bictegravir/emtricitabine/tenofovir (these drugs can inhibit renal tubular secretion of dofetilide) **SIDE EFFECTS** Ventricular tachycardias (e.g., TdP) **NOTES** A preferred antiarrhythmic in heart failure

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Dronedarone *(Multaq)* Tablet	400 mg Q12H Take with meals	**BOXED WARNINGS** Contraindicated in patients with decompensated HF (NYHA Class IV, or any NYHA class with a recent hospitalization due to HF) or permanent AF due to ↑ risk of death, stroke and HF **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Concurrent use of erythromycin, strong CYP3A4 inhibitor or QT-prolonging drug, 2nd/3rd-degree heart block (unless using artificial pacemaker), HR < 50 BPM, QTc ≥ 500 msec, PR interval > 280 msec, lung or liver toxicity from previous amiodarone use, hepatic impairment **WARNINGS** Hepatic failure, pulmonary toxicity (including fibrosis and pneumonitis), marked ↑ SCr, prerenal azotemia and acute renal failure (usually in the setting of heart failure or hypovolemia), avoid in pregnancy and nursing mothers **SIDE EFFECTS** Proarrhythmic, diarrhea, bradycardia, asthenia **NOTES** Unlike amiodarone, dronedarone does not contain iodine and has little effect on thyroid function Dronedarone is an inhibitor of CYP2D6, 3A4 and P-gp and a major substrate of CYP3A4; avoid use with strong inhibitors and inducers of CYP3A4 and with drugs that prolong the QT interval; ↓ digoxin dose by 50% and use lower doses of statins metabolized by CYP3A4, or use alternate statin; monitor INR if on warfarin
Sotalol *(Betapace AF, Betapace, Sotylize, Sorine)* Tablet, solution, injection	PO: 80-160 mg BID IV: 75-150 mg BID CrCl < 60 mL/min: ↓ frequency	**BOXED WARNINGS** Initiation (or reinitiation) and dosage increases should be done in a hospital with continuous ECG monitoring and experienced staff due to risk of VT and QT prolongation Adjust dosing interval based on CrCl to ↓ risk of proarrhythmia; QT prolongation is directly related to sotalol concentration **CONTRAINDICATIONS** 2nd/3rd-degree heart block (unless using artificial pacemaker), congenital or acquired long QT syndrome, sinus bradycardia, uncontrolled HF, cardiogenic shock, asthma *Betapace AF, Sotylize,* sotalol injection: QTc > 450 msec, bronchospastic conditions, CrCl < 40 mL/min, K < 4 mEq/L, sick sinus syndrome **WARNINGS** Proarrhythmic (↑ risk of TdP with QT prolongation), can worsen HF and cause bronchoconstriction **SIDE EFFECTS** Bradycardia, palpitations, chest pain, dizziness, fatigue, dyspnea, N/V **NOTES** Sotalol is a non-selective beta-blocker and K channel blocker *Betapace* should not be substituted with *Betapace AF; Betapace AF* is distributed with educational information for patients with AF/atrial flutter

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Ibutilide *(Corvert)* Injection	1 mg over 10 minutes (0.01 mg/kg if < 60 kg)	**BOXED WARNING** Proarrhythmic (administer with continuous ECG monitoring and experienced staff); confirm that benefits of maintaining NSR outweigh the risks **SIDE EFFECTS** Ventricular tachycardias (e.g., TdP), hypotension, QT prolongation **NOTES** Indicated only for pharmacologic cardioversion
Adenosine Activates adenosine receptors to ↓ AV node conduction		
Adenosine Injection	6 mg IV push (may increase to 12 mg if not responding)	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** 2nd/3rd-degree heart block, sick sinus syndrome or symptomatic bradycardia (unless using artificial pacemaker), bronchospastic lung disease **SIDE EFFECTS** Transient new arrhythmia, facial flushing, chest pain/pressure, GI distress, transient ↓ in blood pressure, dyspnea **NOTES** Half-life < 10 seconds Used for supraventricular re-entrant tachycardias; do not use for ventricular tachycardia or for converting AF/atrial flutter

**Brand discontinued but name still used in practice.*

TREATMENT OF ATRIAL FIBRILLATION

AF occurs when multiple waves of electrical impulses in the atria result in an irregular (and usually rapid) ventricular response. The rapid rate can ↓ cardiac output (because the ventricles do not have time to fill), which can lead to hypotension and worsen ischemia and heart failure. Atrial flutter can progress to AF.

There are different stages of AF (see table below). Patients at risk for AF should make lifestyle modifications (e.g., weight loss, tobacco cessation, minimization of alcohol consumption and control of blood pressure and blood glucose).

STAGES OF AF*			DEFINITION
1	At risk for AF		Presence of modifiable (e.g., obesity) and non-modifiable (e.g., male sex) risk factors associated with AF
2	Pre-AF		Evidence of structural or electrical findings that predispose a patient to AF (e.g., atrial flutter)
3	AF	Paroxysmal	Intermittent AF that terminates within 7 days of onset
		Persistent	Continuous AF sustained for > 7 days
		Long-standing persistent	Continuous AF sustained for > 12 months
		Successful ablation	Freedom from AF after percutaneous or surgical intervention
4	Permanent AF		No further attempts at rhythm control after discussion between patient and provider; a treatment choice rather than a characteristic of the arrhythmia itself

**The terms valvular and non-valvular AF have fallen out of favor, but may still be used in practice. Valvular AF refers to AF with moderate to severe mitral stenosis or with a mechanical heart valve.*

Because of the disorganized depolarization of the atria in AF, the atria cannot adequately contract. Blood becomes stagnant in the atria, which ↑ risk of clot formation. A clot can embolize (break off and travel) to an artery in the brain, which can block blood flow and cause a stroke. To reduce clotting risk, patients with AF may require anticoagulation (see the Anticoagulation chapter).

Guideline-recommended treatment for most types of AF involves using one of two main strategies: rate control or rhythm control (see the Study Tip Gal below).

RATE CONTROL

The goal resting HR is < 80 BPM in patients with symptomatic AF; however, a more lenient goal of < 110 BPM may be reasonable in patients who are asymptomatic and have preserved left ventricular function.

Beta-blockers or non-DHP CCBs are recommended for controlling ventricular rate in patients with AF (see the Hypertension chapter). Of note, patients with heart failure with reduced ejection fraction (HFrEF) should not receive a non-DHP CCB. Digoxin is not first line for ventricular rate control, but can be added for refractory patients or those who cannot tolerate the blood pressure lowering effect of beta-blockers or non-DHP CCBs.

AF: RATE VS. RHYTHM CONTROL & STROKE PROPHYLAXIS

Rate Control

- Patient remains in AF and takes medications to control the ventricular rate (or HR).
  - Beta-blockers or non-DHP CCBs are used (and sometimes digoxin).

Rhythm Control

- The goal is to restore and maintain NSR.
  - Class Ia, Ic or III antiarrhythmic drugs or electrical cardioversion.
- For permanent AF, avoid a rhythm-control strategy with antiarrhythmic drugs (risk outweighs the benefit).

Stroke Prophylaxis (see Anticoagulation chapter)

- Clots can form when a patient is in AF, which can embolize (causing a stroke).
- For many patients, it is safer to remain in AF with rate control than to try to restore NSR. A rate control strategy may require anticoagulation for stroke prevention, depending on the CHA2DS2-VASc score.
  - DOACs (e.g., apixaban, rivaroxaban) are preferred over warfarin for stroke prevention in non-valvular AF.
  - Warfarin is indicated for stroke prevention in patients with AF and a mechanical heart valve.
- When a rhythm control strategy is chosen, restoration and maintenance of NSR are not guaranteed. The decision about long-term anticoagulation will depend on the patient's clot risk.

DIGOXIN

Digoxin inhibits the Na-K-ATPase pump, causing a positive inotropic effect, and exerts a parasympathetic effect, which enhances vagal tone to slow conduction through the AV node, resulting in reduced HR.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Digoxin ***(Lanoxin, Digitek*)*** Tablet, solution, injection	Typical dose: 0.125-0.25 mg PO daily Loading dose [called total digitalizing dose (TDD)]: 8-12 mcg/kg IBW Give ½ of the TDD as the initial dose, followed by ¼ of the TDD in 2 subsequent doses at 4-8 hour intervals (alternatively, give 0.25-0.5 mg once then can repeat 0.25 mg Q6H to a max of 1.5 mg over 24 hours) CrCl < 60 mL/min: ↓ dose or ↓ frequency; hold in acute renal failure ↓ dose by 20-25% when converting from oral to IV **Therapeutic range (AF)** 0.8-2 ng/mL (lower range used for HF)	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Ventricular fibrillation **WARNINGS** 2nd/3rd-degree heart block without a pacemaker, Wolff-Parkinson-White syndrome with AF, vesicant (avoid extravasation) **SIDE EFFECTS** Dizziness, visual/mental disturbances, N/V, diarrhea **MONITORING** Electrolytes, renal function, HR, ECG, BP, and digoxin level (drawn 12-24 hrs after dose) **Toxicity** Symptoms: N/V, loss of appetite, abdominal pain, blurred/double vision, greenish-yellow halos (or altered color perception), confusion, delirium, bradycardia, life-threatening arrhythmias ↑ risk with hypokalemia, hypomagnesemia and hypercalcemia Hypothyroidism can ↑ digoxin levels **NOTES** Used in combination with a beta-blocker or non-DHP CCB for rate control (not usually given alone) Antidote: *DigiFab*

**Brand discontinued but name still used in practice.*

DIGOXIN DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Digoxin is a substrate of P-gp and CYP 3A4 (minor). Levels ↑ with P-gp inhibitors, including amiodarone, dronedarone, diltiazem, verapamil, clarithromycin, itraconazole and many other drugs. With amiodarone or dronedarone, ↓ digoxin dose by 50%.
- Additive effects can occur when used with other drugs that decrease HR, including amiodarone, non-DHP CCBs, beta-blockers, clonidine and dexmedetomidine.

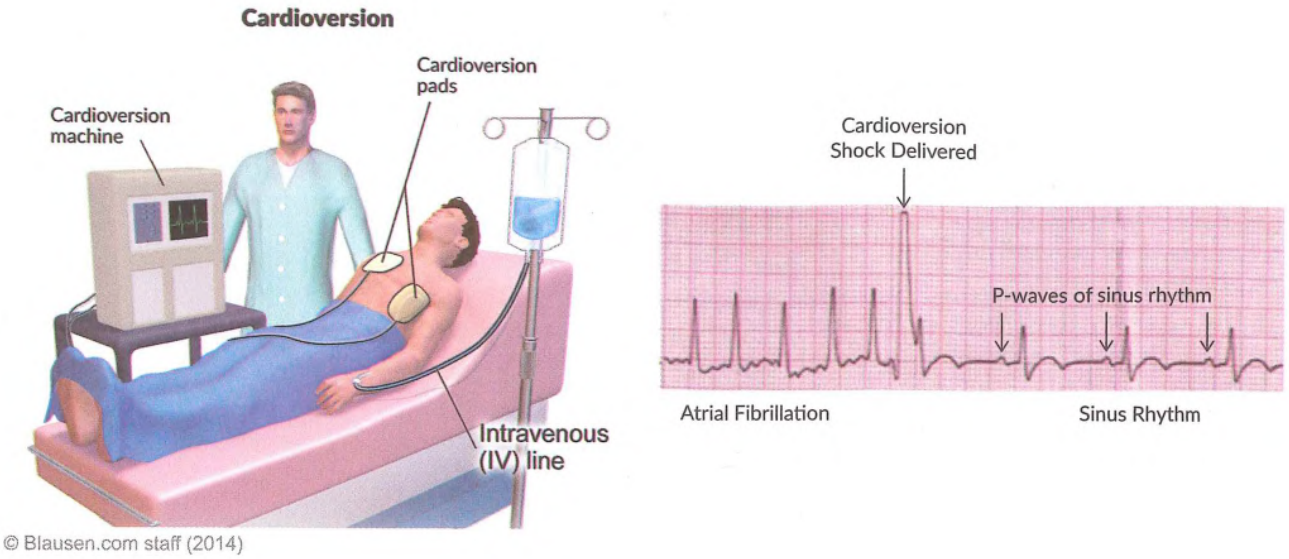
RHYTHM CONTROL

Rhythm control includes methods for conversion to and maintenance of NSR. There are two types of cardioversion:

- Electrical (or direct current) cardioversion is most effective. A shock is delivered through the chest wall, stopping the arrhythmia and allowing the sinus node to begin firing again in NSR (see images on next page).
- Pharmacologic cardioversion may also be attempted with amiodarone (oral and IV), dofetilide, flecainide, ibutilide and propafenone.

Cardioversion carries a risk of thromboembolism. Anticoagulation is usually required before and after successful cardioversion, regardless of the patient's CHA_2DS_2-VASc score or method of cardioversion (see Anticoagulation chapter).

If NSR is restored, many antiarrhythmic options are available for maintenance of NSR. Recommended options include dofetilide, dronedarone, flecainide, propafenone or sotalol. Due to its toxicities, amiodarone is only recommended when other drugs have failed or are contraindicated.



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KEY COUNSELING POINTS

See the Drug Formulations and Patient Counseling chapter for counseling language/layman's terminology. See the Drug Interactions section for each class.

AMIODARONE

- Can cause:
  - Lung damage.
  - Liver damage.
  - Eye damage (nerve damage, corneal deposits).
  - Hypothyroidism or hyperthyroidism.
  - Photosensitivity.
  - Skin discoloration to a blue-gray color. Not a harmful effect; usually goes away months after the medication is stopped.
- Avoid grapefruit.
- Many drug interactions (enzyme inhibitor).

DIGOXIN

- Early symptoms of overdose include loss of appetite and nausea. If this occurs, check heart rate. If bradycardic, a digoxin level should be checked.
- Symptoms of severe overdose include vision changes (e.g., blurred or yellow/green vision), confusion, hallucinations and feeling like you might pass out.
- Avoid dehydration; an overdose can occur more easily if you are dehydrated.
- Many drug interactions.

Select Guidelines/References

2023 ACC/AHA/ACCP/HRS Guideline for the Diagnosis and Management of Atrial Fibrillation: A Report of the American College of Cardiology/American Heart Association Joint Committee on Clinical Practice Guidelines. *J Am Coll Cardiol*. 2023; doi.org/10.1016/j.jacc.2023.08.017.

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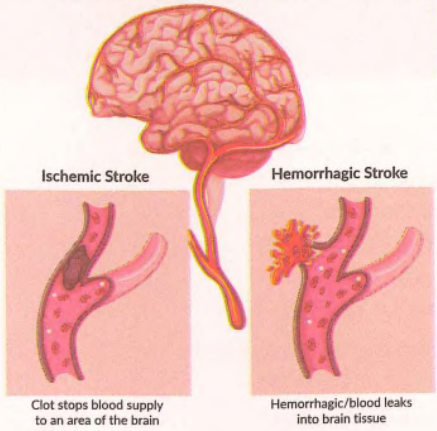

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CHAPTER 33

STROKE

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= Study Tip Gal

BACKGROUND

A stroke, or cerebrovascular accident (CVA), occurs when blood flow to an area of the brain is interrupted. There are different types of stroke.

- Acute ischemic stroke can be caused by:
  - A thrombus (i.e., localized clot) that forms during a cerebral atherosclerotic infarction (similar to a myocardial infarction but in the brain). This is referred to as a non-cardioembolic stroke to indicate the origin is in the brain, not the heart.
  - An embolus (i.e., clot) that forms in the heart and travels to the brain. This is referred to as a cardioembolic stroke. A common cause of cardioembolic stroke is atrial fibrillation (see the Arrhythmias and Anticoagulation chapters).
- Hemorrhagic stroke (bleeding in the brain), including intracerebral hemorrhage (ICH) or subarachnoid hemorrhage (SAH).

Approximately 87% of all strokes are ischemic, and 13% are hemorrhagic. When a stroke occurs, ischemia kills brain cells in the immediate area of injury as well as cells in the larger, surrounding area (i.e., penumbra), resulting in permanent neurologic deficits or death.

A transient ischemic attack (TIA) is sometimes called a "mini-stroke". It is caused by a temporary clot (and blockage of blood flow) in the brain. Symptoms resemble acute ischemic stroke but resolve within minutes to a few hours with no permanent damage. TIAs are often a warning sign for acute ischemic stroke and should be medically managed with the same risk reduction strategies (see the Ischemic Stroke: Secondary Prevention section later in the chapter).

STROKE RISK FACTORS

The following box describes modifiable and non-modifiable risk factors for stroke, many of which contribute to the development of atherosclerosis in cranial vasculature.

Modifiable risk factors	Non-modifiable risk factors
Hypertension – most important	Prior stroke or TIA
Atrial fibrillation	Advanced age (e.g., ≥ 80 years)
Dyslipidemia	Race (higher risk in African American patients)
Diabetes	Genetic diseases (e.g., sickle cell disease)
Physical inactivity	
Smoking	

PRESENTATION AND DIAGNOSIS

The American Stroke Association (ASA) and the American Heart Association (AHA) have public education campaigns to increase early recognition of stroke symptoms (see the Study Tip Gal below). Promptly calling 911 is essential, as brain tissue is rapidly lost as the stroke progresses (commonly stated as "time is brain").

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF STROKE

ACT F.A.S.T.

Face drooping
Ask the person to smile. Does one side of the face droop or is it numb? Is the smile uneven?

Arm weakness
Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward?

Speech difficulty
Ask the person to repeat a simple sentence. Are the words slurred? Is the sentence repeated correctly?

Time to call 911
If the person shows any of the symptoms above, even if they go away, call 911 immediately!

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Healthcare providers use clinical (e.g., history, physical exam, laboratory tests) and neurological assessments [e.g., the National Institutes of Health Stroke Scale (NIHSS)] to determine stroke severity and treatment.

Brain imaging using computed tomography (CT) is ideally performed within 20 minutes of arrival to the emergency department to quickly identify whether the stroke symptoms are due to a hemorrhage. Drugs used to treat ischemic stroke can increase the risk of bleeding and can be harmful, or even fatal, in hemorrhagic stroke cases. Less commonly, magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) is performed.

ISCHEMIC STROKE: ACUTE MANAGEMENT

In addition to cardiac and respiratory support, the immediate goal of treatment is to restore blood flow to the ischemic area of the brain to obtain complete neurologic recovery. Intracranial pressure (ICP), cerebral perfusion pressure (CPP) and blood pressure (BP) should be monitored and controlled. Restoring blood flow may require mechanical removal of a clot (e.g., with stent retrievers), or the clot can be dissolved with intravenous fibrinolytic therapy if the patient arrives at the hospital in a timely manner after symptom onset.

ALTEPLASE

Alteplase is recombinant tissue plasminogen activator (tPA or rtPA). It binds to fibrin in a thrombus (clot) and converts plasminogen to plasmin, resulting in fibrinolysis. Alteplase is the only fibrinolytic drug FDA-approved to treat acute ischemic stroke. Tenecteplase, another fibrinolytic, is occasionally used off-label.

Patients are candidates for alteplase administration if there is no bleeding seen on brain imaging (e.g., CT scan) and the following criteria for timing are met:

- Stroke symptom onset is ≤ 4.5 hours (guideline recommendation for most patients; FDA-approved timeline is symptom onset ≤ 3 hours).
- Alteplase can be administered within 60 minutes of hospital arrival (door-to-needle time).

Before administering alteplase, it should be established that the patient has no contraindications to use (see Study Tip Gal below and the Drug Table on the next page).

BLEEDING RISKS WITH ALTEPLASE

Alteplase breaks up existing clots → breaking up a clot increases the risk of bleeding

Before treatment, check that the patient isn't already at high bleeding risk. Select conditions and drugs that increase bleeding risk are contraindications to alteplase. They fit into these categories:

- Active internal bleed (e.g., ICH)
- Risk of internal bleed, due to:
  - Severe hypertension (BP > 185/110 mmHg): if this is the only contraindication to treatment, BP should be lowered to < 185/110 mmHg with IV medications (e.g., labetalol, nicardipine) before proceeding with alteplase administration
  - Other conditions (e.g., head trauma)
  - Labs (e.g., elevated INR, low platelet count)
  - Drug interactions (e.g., anticoagulant use)

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Alteplase *(Activase)* Injection ***Cathflo Activase*** (single-use 2 mg vial) used to restore function of potentially clotted central lines and devices	0.9 mg/kg (maximum dose 90 mg) Administer 10% of the calculated dose as a bolus over 1 minute then infuse the remainder over 60 minutes Must rule out hemorrhagic stroke before use (e.g., ICH, SAH)	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Active internal bleeding or known bleeding diathesis History of recent stroke (within the past 3 months) Severe uncontrolled hypertension (BP > 185/110 mmHg – see Study Tip Gal on prior page and Monitoring below) Any prior intracranial hemorrhage (ICH) Other conditions that increase bleeding risk: recent (within 3 months) intracranial or intraspinal surgery or head trauma; presence of an intracranial neoplasm, arteriovenous malformation or aneurysm Labs that increase bleeding risk: INR > 1.7, aPTT > 40 seconds, platelet count < 100,000/mm^3 Treatment-dose LMWH (within the previous 24 hours), use of a direct thrombin inhibitor or direct factor Xa inhibitor (within the previous 48 hours) or taking warfarin with an INR > 1.7 Blood glucose < 50 mg/dL **SIDE EFFECTS** Major bleeding (e.g., ICH) **MONITORING** Hgb, Hct, s/sx of bleeding Neurological assessments and BP (must be < 185/110 mmHg before alteplase is started and maintained at < 180/105 mmHg for at least 24 hours after the infusion) Head CT 24 hrs after treatment, before starting anticoagulants or antiplatelet drugs **NOTES** Contraindications and dosing differ when used for ACS (refer to the Acute Coronary Syndromes chapter) and pulmonary embolism, due to a higher risk of hemorrhagic conversion (i.e., brain bleed) in stroke If severe headache, acute hypertension, nausea, vomiting or worsening neurological function occurs, discontinue the infusion and obtain an emergent head CT The abbreviation "tPA" (or "TPA") is prone to errors; it is not recommended by ISMP

Contraindications are summarized from the package labeling and the AHA/ASA guidelines.

ALTEPLASE DRUG INTERACTIONS

- There is a risk for additive effects when used in combination with other drugs that can ↑ bleeding (see the Drug Interactions chapter for further discussion).

OTHER TREATMENTS

ASPIRIN

Initiation of aspirin 81 – 325 mg daily is recommended as soon as possible (within 48 hours) after stroke onset to prevent early recurrent stroke. Aspirin should not be given within 24 hours of fibrinolytic therapy.

DEEP VEIN THROMBOSIS PREVENTION

Deep vein thrombosis (DVT) prophylaxis with intermittent pneumatic compression (IPC) devices is recommended. IPC devices are cuffs placed over the legs that periodically fill with air and squeeze the legs to increase blood flow.

If subcutaneous anticoagulants (unfractionated heparin or LMWH) are used, they should not be started within 24 hours of receiving alteplase.

HYPERTENSION MANAGEMENT

See the Study Tip Gal and the Drug Table on the previous pages for BP criteria and management in patients who are eligible to receive alteplase.

If alteplase is not administered, IV antihypertensives (e.g., labetalol, nicardipine) may not be required unless BP is severely elevated (≥ 220/120 mmHg). In this case, a 15% reduction in BP during the first 24 hours after stroke onset is considered safe. Once neurologically stable, oral antihypertensive medications may be initiated (see the Ischemic Stroke: Secondary Prevention section).

HYPERGLYCEMIA MANAGEMENT

Maintain blood glucose levels in the range of 140 – 180 mg/dL and closely monitor to prevent hypoglycemia (which can mimic stroke symptoms).

ISCHEMIC STROKE: SECONDARY PREVENTION

The following recommendations reflect secondary prevention measures after the first occurrence of an ischemic stroke or TIA. Many of the same recommendations also apply to primary prevention of stroke.

TREATMENT OF MODIFIABLE RISK FACTORS

- Hypertension – blood pressure lowering treatment is often initiated after the first several days following a stroke. Thiazide diuretics, ACE inhibitors and ARBs have the best evidence for stroke risk reduction. A goal BP < 130/80 mmHg is recommended for most patients (see the Hypertension chapter). Lifestyle modifications are an important part of hypertension management (see below).
- Dyslipidemia – use a high-intensity statin (guidelines recommend atorvastatin 80 mg/day). In patients unable to achieve LDL goals, ezetimibe or a PCSK9 monoclonal antibody may be added to statin therapy (see the Dyslipidemia chapter).
- Diabetes – patients with no established history should be screened for diabetes; an A1C is the preferred test. Treat diabetes according to the most recent ADA guidelines (see the Diabetes chapter).
- Atrial fibrillation – cardioembolic stroke due to atrial fibrillation requires anticoagulation to prevent future strokes (see the Anticoagulation chapter).
- Lifestyle modifications – patients should be screened for obesity and counseled on lifestyle modifications for hypertension and cardiovascular risk reduction (e.g., smoking cessation, diet, exercise, weight loss).
  - ☐ Nutrition – a heart-healthy diet (e.g., a Mediterranean diet) emphasizing vegetables, fruits, fish, poultry, whole grains, legumes, nuts and olive oil is recommended. Sodium restriction (e.g., < 1.5 grams/day) aids with BP reduction.
  - ☐ Physical activity – if capable, patients should engage in at least 10 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise four days/week or 20 minutes of vigorous activity two days/week.
  - ☐ Weight reduction – maintain a body mass index (BMI) 18.5 – 24.9 kg/m^2 and waist circumference < 35 inches for women and < 40 inches for men.
  - ☐ Alcohol intake – limit to ≤ 2 drinks/day for males and ≤ 1 drink/day for females.

ANTIPLATELET TREATMENT

For patients with non-cardioembolic ischemic stroke or TIA, antiplatelet therapy with aspirin, aspirin/extended-release dipyridamole or clopidogrel is recommended to reduce the risk of recurrent stroke, MI or death. Prasugrel is contraindicated in anyone with a history of TIA or stroke due to an increased risk of intracranial bleed.

The combination of clopidogrel and low-dose aspirin can be initiated within 24 hours of a minor ischemic stroke (i.e., NIHSS score ≤ 3, did not receive alteplase) and continued for 21 – 90 days. The combination should not be used long-term for secondary prevention of stroke or TIA as it increases the risk of hemorrhage. Rather, short-term dual antiplatelet therapy should be followed by antiplatelet monotherapy, continued indefinitely. This is different than the recommendations for dual antiplatelet therapy in heart disease (see the Stable Angina and Acute Coronary Syndromes chapters). Ticagrelor with aspirin can also be considered following a minor to moderate stroke (i.e., NIHSS score ≤ 5); this combination should not be continued beyond 30 days.

There is no added benefit to increasing the aspirin dose in patients already taking aspirin who have an ischemic stroke or TIA. Alternative antiplatelets are often considered, though no single drug or combination has been adequately studied in patients who had an event while receiving aspirin.

ANTIPLATELET DRUGS

Aspirin irreversibly inhibits cyclooxygenase-1 and 2 (COX-1 and 2) enzymes which decreases prostaglandin (PG) and thromboxane A2 (TXA2) production. TXA2 is a potent vasoconstrictor and inducer of platelet aggregation.

Dipyridamole (given with aspirin) inhibits the uptake of adenosine into platelets and increases cAMP levels, which inhibits platelet aggregation.

Clopidogrel is a prodrug that irreversibly inhibits P2Y12 ADP-mediated platelet activation and aggregation.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Aspirin *(Bayer, Bufferin, Ecotrin,* *Ascriptin, Durlaza*,* others) + omeprazole *(Yosprala)* OTC: tablet, chewable tablet, enteric coated tablet, suppository Rx: delayed-release tablet *(Yosprala)* See Pain chapter for more information on aspirin products	50-325 mg daily *Yosprala:* 81 mg/40 mg or 325 mg/40 mg daily Do not crush enteric-coated, delayed-release or ER products	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** NSAID or salicylate allergy; children and teenagers with viral infection due to risk of Reye's syndrome (symptoms include somnolence, N/V, confusion); rhinitis, nasal polyps or asthma (due to risk of urticaria, angioedema or bronchospasm) **WARNINGS** Bleeding [including GI bleed/ulceration, ↑ risk with heavy alcohol use or other drugs with bleeding risk (e.g., NSAIDs, anticoagulants, other antiplatelets)], tinnitus (salicylate overdose) **SIDE EFFECTS** Dyspepsia, heartburn, bleeding, nausea **MONITORING** Symptoms of bleeding, bruising **NOTES** To ↓ nausea, use EC or buffered product or take with food PPIs may be used to protect the gut with chronic NSAID use (e.g., *Yosprala* is indicated for those at risk of developing aspirin-associated gastric ulcers); consider the risks from chronic PPI use (↓ bone density, ↑ infection risk)

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Extended-release dipyridamole/aspirin *(Aggrenox*)* Capsule	200 mg/25 mg BID If intolerable headache: 200 mg/25 mg QHS (+ low-dose aspirin daily in the morning), then resume BID dosing in 1 week	Same as aspirin plus: **WARNINGS** Hypotension and chest pain (in patients with coronary artery disease) can occur due to the vasodilatory effects of dipyridamole **SIDE EFFECTS** Headache (from the vasodilatory effects of dipyridamole) **NOTES** Not interchangeable with the individual components of aspirin and dipyridamole Aspirin dose provided is not adequate for prevention of cardiac events (e.g., MI)
Clopidogrel ***(Plavix)*** Tablet	75 mg daily	**BOXED WARNINGS** Clopidogrel is a prodrug. Effectiveness depends on the conversion to an active metabolite, mainly by CYP450 2C19. Poor metabolizers of CYP2C19 exhibit higher cardiovascular events than patients with normal CYP2C19 function. Tests to check CYP2C19 genotype can be used as an aid in determining a therapeutic strategy. Consider alternative treatments in patients identified as CYP2C19 poor metabolizers. See the Pharmacogenomics chapter. **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Active serious bleeding (e.g., GI bleed, intracranial hemorrhage) **WARNINGS** Bleeding risk: stop 5 days prior to elective surgery, do not use with omeprazole or esomeprazole (see the Drug Interactions section), premature discontinuation (↑ risk of thrombosis), thrombotic thrombocytopenic purpura (TTP) **SIDE EFFECTS** Generally well tolerated, unless bleeding occurs **MONITORING** Symptoms of bleeding, Hgb/Hct as necessary **NOTES** Drug of choice in stroke/TIA if there is a contraindication or allergy to aspirin; do not use in combination with aspirin long-term for stroke prevention

**Brand discontinued but brand name still used in practice.*

ANTIPLATELET DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Most drug interactions are due to additive effects with other drugs that can ↑ bleeding risk (e.g., anticoagulants, NSAIDs, SSRIs, SNRIs, some herbals). See the Drug Interactions chapter.
- Clopidogrel: avoid in combination with omeprazole and esomeprazole (other PPIs interact less) and use caution with other CYP2C19 inhibitors.

HEMORRHAGIC STROKE

Hemorrhagic strokes result in a significant amount of morbidity and mortality. Treatment is largely supportive and includes airway management, establishing hemostasis, monitoring (and lowering if needed) intracranial pressure, prevention or management of seizures, assessment for dysphagia and control of blood pressure and blood glucose. Hospitalized patients with hemorrhagic stroke should use IPC devices on the legs to prevent DVT. Anticoagulants should not be used while a patient is bleeding.

INTRACEREBRAL HEMORRHAGE (ICH)

In addition to traditional stroke risk factors (e.g., hypertension), other causes of ICH include trauma (e.g., motor vehicle collision) or antithrombotic medications (e.g., anticoagulants). There is a high risk for rapid neurologic deterioration in the early hours of an ICH due to ongoing bleeding and enlargement of the brain hematoma.

Patients with a severe coagulation factor deficiency or thrombocytopenia should receive appropriate therapy (e.g., factor replacement, platelet infusions). As appropriate, anticoagulants should be discontinued and reversal agents should be administered (see the Anticoagulation chapter for information on reversal drugs). If there is clinical evidence of seizures, they should be treated, but prophylactic antiseizure medications (ASMs) should not be used.

TREATING ELEVATED INTRACRANIAL PRESSURE

Increased intracranial pressure (ICP), caused by increased blood volume and edema in a relatively fixed intracranial space, is the primary complication of an ICH; it is a medical emergency that can lead to brain death. Interventions to lower ICP include elevating the head of the bed to at least 30 degrees and administering IV osmotic therapy with either hypertonic saline (e.g., 3% NaCl, 23.4% NaCl) or mannitol. These drugs increase plasma osmolarity, creating an osmotic gradient that draws water out of the brain.

Mannitol

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Mannitol *(Osmitrol)* Injection	5%, 10%, 15%, 20%, 25% Mannitol 20%: 0.25-1 g/kg IV Q6-8H PRN	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Severe renal disease (anuria), severe hypovolemia, pulmonary edema or congestion, active intracranial bleed (except during craniotomy) **WARNINGS** CNS toxicity (can accumulate in the brain, causing rebound increases in ICP, if used for long periods of time as a continuous infusion; intermittent boluses preferred), extravasation (vesicant), nephrotoxicity, fluid and electrolyte imbalances (e.g., dehydration, hyperkalemia, acidosis, ↑ osmolar gap) **SIDE EFFECTS** Dehydration, headache, lethargy, ↑ or ↓ BP **MONITORING** Renal function, daily fluid intake and output, serum electrolytes, serum and urine osmolality, ICP, CPP **NOTES** Maintain serum osmolality < 300-320 mOsm/kg Inspect for crystals before administering; if crystals are present, warm the solution to redissolve Use a filter for administration with mannitol concentrations ≥ 20%

ACUTE SUBARACHNOID HEMORRHAGE (SAH)

SAH is bleeding in the space between the brain and the surrounding membrane (subarachnoid space). SAH can result from a cerebral aneurysm rupture and results in a severe headache, often described as the "worst headache ever experienced." Surgical clipping or endovascular coiling to remove the aneurysm can prevent rebleeding. Cerebral artery vasospasm can occur 3 – 21 days after the bleed, causing delayed cerebral ischemia; oral nimodipine can improve outcomes associated with vasospasm-induced ischemia and should be used. Prophylactic ASMs can be considered, but routine use of long-term ASMs is not recommended.

NIMODIPINE

Nimodipine is a dihydropyridine calcium channel blocker that is more selective for cerebral arteries due to increased lipophilicity. It is only indicated for SAH and is not used as an antihypertensive treatment.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Nimodipine *(Nymalize)* Capsule, oral solution	60 mg PO Q4H × 21 days Swallow capsules whole; administer on an empty stomach, at least 1 hour before or 2 hours after meals Cirrhosis: 30 mg PO Q4H for 21 days (closely monitor)	**BOXED WARNINGS** Do not administer nimodipine IV or by other parenteral routes; death and serious life-threatening adverse events have occurred (e.g., cardiac arrest, cardiovascular collapse, hypotension, bradycardia) when the contents of nimodipine capsules have been injected (see Notes) **CONTRAINDICATIONS** ↑ risk of significant hypotension when used in combination with strong inhibitors of CYP3A4 (see the Drug Interactions section) **SIDE EFFECTS** Hypotension **MONITORING** CPP, ICP, BP, HR, neurological checks **NOTES** If capsules cannot be swallowed and the oral solution is unavailable, the capsule contents may be withdrawn with a parenteral syringe, then transferred to an oral syringe that cannot accept a needle and that can only administer medication orally or via nasogastric tube; the medication should be drawn up in the pharmacy to reduce medication errors Label oral syringes "For Oral Use Only" or "Not for IV Use" (including the oral syringe supplied with the commercially available solution)

NIMODIPINE DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Nimodipine is a major substrate of CYP3A4; strong CYP3A4 inhibitors (e.g., clarithromycin, protease inhibitors, azole antifungals) are contraindicated. Avoid grapefruit juice.
- Strong CYP3A4 inducers (e.g., rifampin, phenytoin, carbamazepine, St. John's wort) can decrease the levels of nimodipine and should be avoided.

KEY COUNSELING POINTS

Refer to the Stable Angina chapter for patient counseling on aspirin and clopidogrel.

Select Guidelines/References

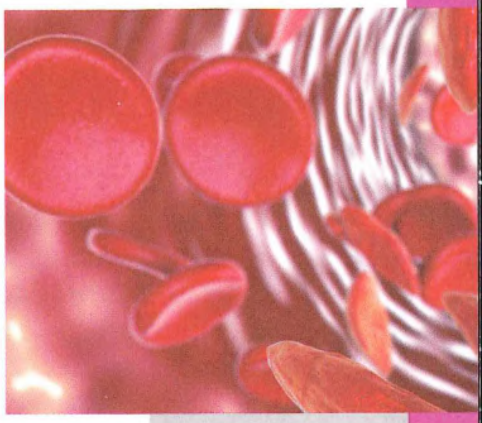
Guidelines for the early management of patients with acute ischemic stroke: 2019 update to the 2018 guidelines for the early management of acute ischemic stroke: A guideline for healthcare professionals from the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association. Stroke. 2019;50:e344-e418.

2018 Guidelines for the early management of patients with acute ischemic stroke. AHA/ASA. Stroke. 2018;49:e46-e99.

2021 Guideline for the prevention of stroke in patients with stroke and transient ischemic attack. AHA/ASA. Stroke. 2021;52(7):e364-e467.

Guidelines for the management of spontaneous intracerebral hemorrhage. AHA/ASA. Stroke. 2015;41:2108-2129.

ANTICOAGULATION & BLOOD DISORDERS



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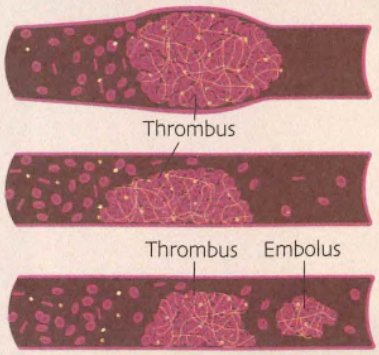

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CHAPTER 34

ANTICOAGULATION

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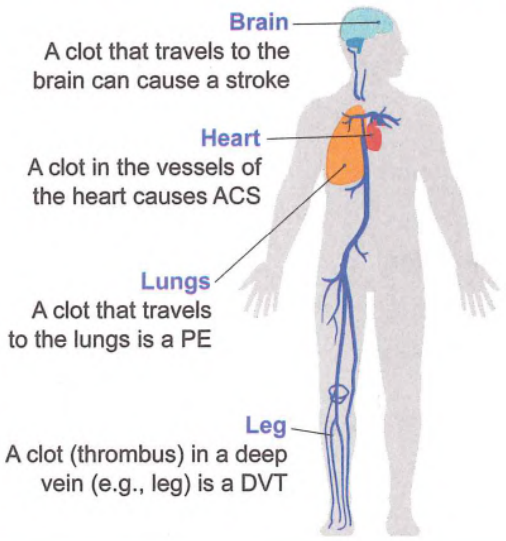
BACKGROUND

Anticoagulants prevent blood clots from forming and prevent existing clots from becoming larger, but they do not break down clots (like fibrinolytics). Anticoagulants are used to prevent and treat venous thromboembolism (VTE), which refers to deep vein thrombosis (DVT) and/or pulmonary embolism (PE). Anticoagulants are also used in the immediate treatment of acute coronary syndromes (ACS) and for the prevention of cardioembolic stroke. The most common side effect of anticoagulants is bleeding, which can be fatal. Anticoagulants are high-alert medications for this reason.

CLOT FORMATION

Coagulation is the process by which blood clots form. The Virchow triad describes three factors that can lead to activation of the coagulation process and subsequent clot formation. These include blood vessel injury, blood stasis (stopping or slowing of blood flow) and pro-thrombotic conditions.

CONDITIONS RELATED TO BLOOD CLOTS



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Blood clots can form anywhere in the body and cause serious conditions that can be fatal.

If the clot (or a piece of it) travels to another location, it is called an embolus.

Anticoagulants are used for conditions associated with blood clots.

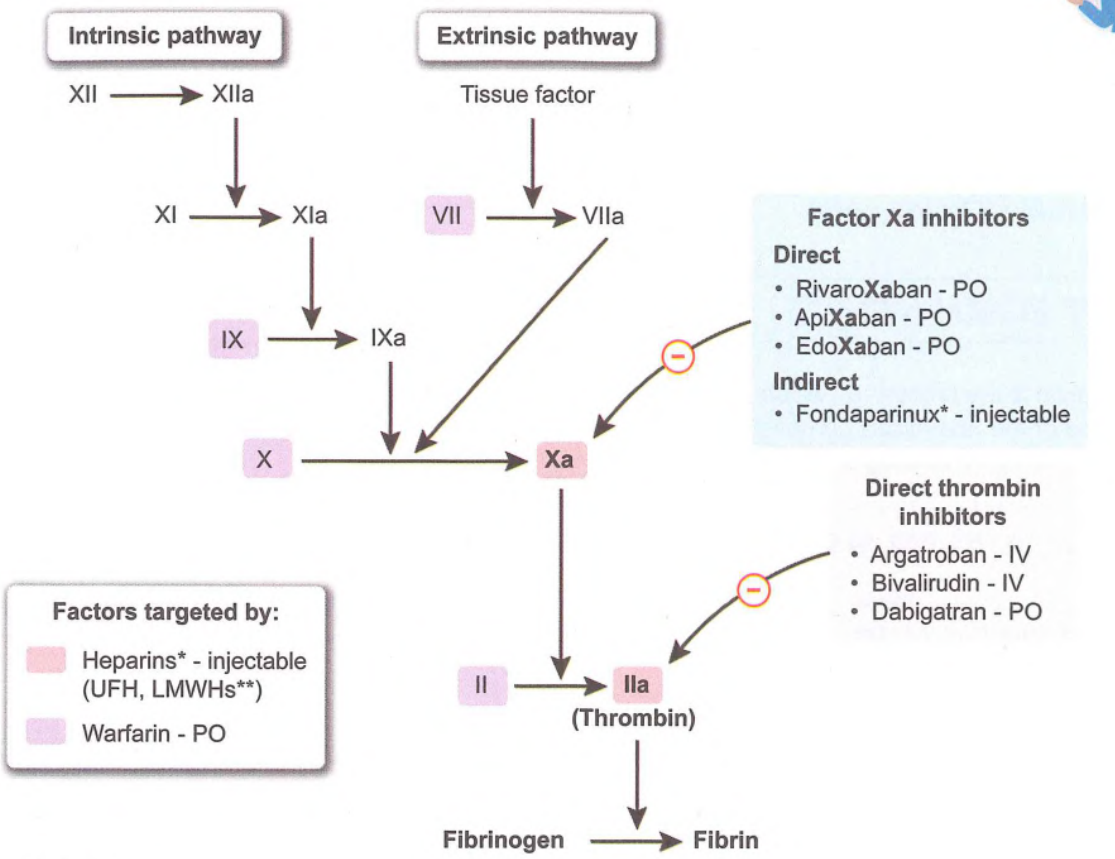
COAGULATION CASCADE

An important part of coagulation is the coagulation cascade, which is a process that occurs through the activation of a series of clotting factors.

Clotting factors are proteins made primarily by the liver. All of the clotting factors have an inactive and active form; the "a" next to a factor means "active/activated" (e.g., factor X is inactive and factor Xa is active). Once activated, a clotting factor will activate the next clotting factor in the sequence until fibrin, a protein essential for clot formation and stabilization, is formed.

The coagulation cascade has two pathways that lead to the conversion of prothrombin to thrombin and subsequent fibrin formation: the contact activation pathway (or the intrinsic pathway) and the tissue factor pathway (or the extrinsic pathway). Anticoagulants inhibit the coagulation cascade to prevent (or stop further) clot formation (See Study Tip Gal on the next page).

COAGULATION CASCADE



*Via antithrombin.
** Enoxaparin, Dalteparin.
IV = intravenous; ***LMWH*** = low molecular weight heparin; ***PO*** = oral; ***SC*** = subcutaneous; ***UFH*** = unfractionated heparin.

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DRUG TREATMENT

Parenteral anticoagulants are used for ACS treatment and prevention/treatment of VTE. Oral anticoagulants are used for prevention/treatment of VTE, as well as for prevention of cardioembolic stroke in patients with atrial fibrillation (AF). These anticoagulants include warfarin (a vitamin K antagonist), factor Xa inhibitors and thrombin inhibitors. The oral factor Xa inhibitors and thrombin inhibitors are also called direct-acting oral anticoagulants (DOACs). For most conditions, DOACs are preferred over warfarin (see Study Tip Gal on the next page).

Organizations that publish anticoagulation guidelines include the American College of Chest Physicians (CHEST) and the American College of Cardiology/American Heart Association (ACC/AHA).

VITAMIN K ANTAGONISM

Warfarin is a vitamin K antagonist. Because vitamin K is required for the carboxylation (activation) of clotting factors II, VII, IX and X, warfarin inhibits multiple steps of the coagulation cascade. Warfarin is also a narrow therapeutic index drug, requiring careful monitoring of the international normalized ratio (INR) to assess efficacy and safety.

DOACs VS. WARFARIN

DOACs have fewer drug-drug interactions and less/comparable bleeding compared to warfarin

DOAC dosing is based on the indication and kidney function whereas warfarin dosing is adjusted based on the INR

DOACs are preferred for stroke prevention in AF

- BUT – if there is moderate-to-severe mitral stenosis or a mechanical heart valve, use warfarin

DOACs are preferred for VTE treatment

- BUT – if the patient has triple-positive antiphospholipid syndrome or a mechanical heart valve, use warfarin

DOACs are preferred over warfarin in older adults per Beers Criteria

- BUT – rivaroxaban has ↑ risk of bleeding vs other DOACs; avoid for long-term treatment of AF/VTE in older adults

FACTOR Xa INHIBITION

Antithrombin (AT) is an endogenous anticoagulant; it inactivates thrombin (factor IIa) and other proteases (e.g., factor Xa) involved in blood clotting. Unfractionated heparin (UFH), low molecular weight heparins (LMWHs) and fondaparinux work by binding to AT to cause a conformational change which increases AT activity 1,000-fold. UFH inhibits factor IIa (thrombin) and factor Xa equally while LMWHs inhibit factor Xa to a greater degree than UFH. Fondaparinux has selective inhibition of factor Xa.

Apixaban, edoxaban and rivaroxaban work by inhibiting factor Xa directly. These oral medications are taken once or twice daily and require no laboratory monitoring for efficacy.

THROMBIN INHIBITION

UFH and LMWHs indirectly inhibit thrombin and factor Xa through AT binding. Direct thrombin inhibitors (DTIs) block thrombin directly, decreasing the amount of fibrin available for clot formation. The intravenous DTIs (e.g., argatroban) are clinically important because they do not cross-react with heparin-induced thrombocytopenia (HIT) antibodies. Dabigatran is an oral DTI.

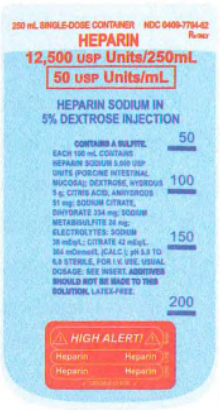
KEY POINTS

When studying the Anticoagulation, Acute Coronary Syndromes, Stable Angina and Stroke chapters, it can be difficult to determine when a fibrinolytic, antiplatelet or anticoagulant would be appropriate.

- Oral anticoagulants are used mainly in AF (for stroke prevention) and for DVT/PE (treatment and prevention). Oral medications like rivaroxaban or apixaban are not indicated for the acute management of an ACS since platelet aggregation is the main target of drug therapy.
- Fibrinolytics break down existing clots but are associated with a very high risk of bleeding. They are used to immediately treat an acute ischemic stroke or STEMI when the patient could die without rapid restoration of blood flow.
- Antiplatelet drugs (e.g., aspirin, clopidogrel, ticagrelor) are used mainly for coronary artery disease (including ACS) and to prevent recurrent ischemic stroke/TIA. Dual antiplatelet therapy (DAPT) refers to using both aspirin and a P2Y12 inhibitor (e.g., clopidogrel) together, which is common in patients who have had an ACS. Antiplatelet drugs are not sufficient for treating DVT/PE.

HIGH-ALERT MEDICATIONS

All anticoagulants can cause significant bleeding and are classified as "high-alert" medications by the Institute for Safe Medication Practices (ISMP). Bleeding events with anticoagulants put patients at increased risk for death. The Joint Commission's National Patient Safety Goals require policies and protocols to properly initiate and manage anticoagulant therapy. Patients receiving therapeutic anticoagulation should receive individualized care through a defined process that includes standardized ordering, dispensing, administration, monitoring and patient/caregiver education. Refer to the Medication Safety & Quality Improvement chapter for additional information.



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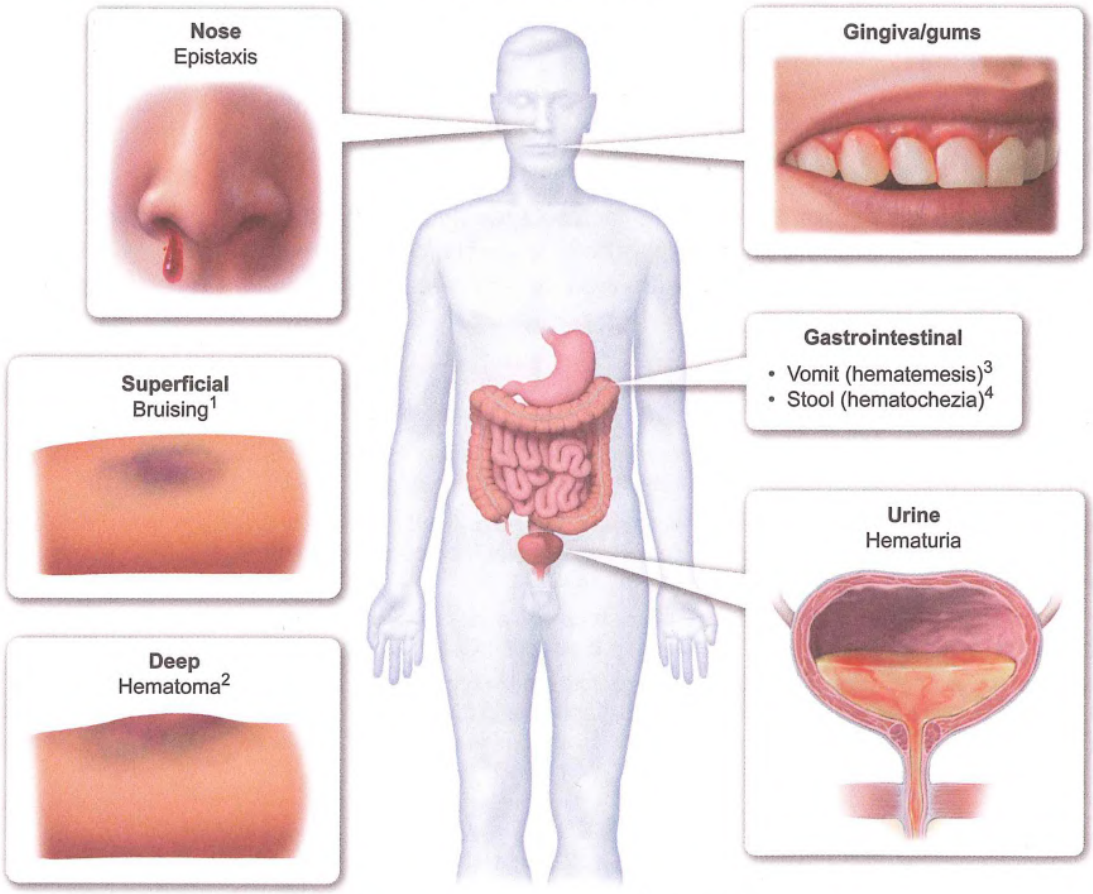
Common sites of visible bleeding are reviewed in the box below. In some cases, bleeding will not be visible, but can be identified from symptoms and/or labs. An acute drop in hemoglobin (e.g., ≥ 2 g/dL) could signify that bleeding is occurring (visible or not). Internal bleeding can occur anywhere, such as a retroperitoneal (behind the peritoneal space) bleed, a dissection (tear) within a blood vessel wall (e.g., aortic dissection) or an intracranial bleed (e.g., hemorrhagic stroke).

BLEEDING TYPES AND CAUSES

Sites of bleeding



[1] *Results from a small leakage of blood from veins and capillaries under the skin (appears flat).*
[2] *Results from pooled blood due to a large leakage of blood (appears hard and raised).*
[3] *Suggestive of upper gastrointestinal bleed (i.e., esophageal, stomach, or duodenal bleed); can consist of bright red blood or look brown and lumpy (coffee ground emesis).*
[4] *Suggestive of lower gastrointestinal bleed (i.e., colonic, rectal, or anal bleed); appears as bright red blood.*

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UNFRACTIONATED HEPARIN

UFH binds to antithrombin (AT) and potentiates its ability to inactivate thrombin (factor IIa) and factor Xa (as well as factors IXa, XIa, XIIa and plasmin), thus preventing the conversion of fibrinogen to fibrin.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Unfractionated Heparin Injection Premixed solution in D5W or ½NS (25,000 units in 250 mL) Syringes, vials and flushes are available in many strengths (ranging from 1 unit/mL to 20,000 units/mL) and volumes (ranging from 1 to 30 mL)	**Prophylaxis of VTE** 5,000 units SC Q8-12H **Treatment of VTE** Initial: 80 units/kg IV bolus; 18 units/kg/hr infusion **Treatment of ACS/STEMI** Initial: 60 units/kg IV bolus; 12 units/kg/hr infusion Use total body weight for dosing Do not administer IM due to hematoma risk	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Uncontrolled active bleed (e.g., intracranial hemorrhage), severe thrombocytopenia, history of HIT Some products contain benzyl alcohol as a preservative (do not use in neonates, infants, pregnancy and breastfeeding) and/or may be derived from animal tissue (do not use with pork allergy) **WARNING** Fatal medication errors: verify the correct concentration is chosen **SIDE EFFECTS** Bleeding (e.g., epistaxis, bruising, gingival, GI), thrombocytopenia, HIT, hyperkalemia, osteoporosis (with long-term use), alopecia **MONITORING** Titrate infusions to target aPTT or anti-Xa level – check level 6 hrs after initiation and every 6 hrs until therapeutic, then every 24 hrs and with every dosage change aPTT therapeutic range is 1.5-2.5× control (per specific institutional protocol); anti-Xa therapeutic range is typically 0.3-0.7 units/mL aPTT and anti-Xa monitoring are not required for SC (prophylactic) dosing Platelets, Hgb, Hct at baseline and daily (↓ in platelets > 50% from baseline suggests possible HIT) **NOTES** Antidote: protamine (see Antidotes and Reversal section) Unpredictable anticoagulant response (has variable and extensive binding to plasma proteins and cells) Continuous IV infusions are common for treating VTE and ACS because heparin has a rapid onset and short half-life (1.5 hrs); onset of SC is longer (20-30 mins) Heparin lock flushes are only used to keep IV lines open. Fatal errors, especially in neonates, have occurred when the incorrect heparin strength (higher concentration) was chosen. Heparin injection (10,000 units/mL) and flushes (10 or 100 units/mL) look and sound alike.

LOW MOLECULAR WEIGHT HEPARINS

LMWHs bind to AT and potentiate its ability to inactivate factor Xa and factor IIa, which prevents conversion of fibrinogen to fibrin. The anti-factor Xa activity is greater than the anti-factor IIa activity.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Enoxaparin *(Lovenox)* Multidose vial (300 mg/3 mL) and prefilled syringes: 30 mg/0.3 mL 40 mg/0.4 mL 60 mg/0.6 mL 80 mg/0.8 mL 100 mg/mL 120 mg/0.8 mL 150 mg/mL 1 mg = 100 units anti-Xa activity	**Prophylaxis of VTE** 30 mg SC Q12H or 40 mg SC daily CrCl < 30 mL/min: 30 mg SC daily **Treatment of VTE and UA/NSTEMI** 1 mg/kg SC Q12H or 1.5 mg/kg SC daily (only for inpatient VTE treatment) CrCl < 30 mL/min: 1 mg/kg SC daily **Treatment of STEMI in patients < 75 years of age** 30 mg IV bolus plus a 1 mg/kg SC dose followed by 1 mg/kg SC Q12H (max 100 mg for the first two SC doses only) CrCl < 30 mL/min: 30 mg IV bolus plus a 1 mg/kg SC dose, followed by 1 mg/kg SC daily **Treatment of STEMI in patients ≥ 75 years of age** 0.75 mg/kg SC Q12H (no IV bolus; max 75 mg for the first two SC doses only) CrCl < 30 mL/min: 1 mg/kg SC daily (no bolus) Use total body weight for dosing	**BOXED WARNINGS** Patients receiving neuraxial anesthesia (epidural, spinal) or undergoing spinal puncture are at risk of hematomas and subsequent paralysis **CONTRAINDICATIONS** History of HIT, active major bleed, hypersensitivity to pork **SIDE EFFECTS** Bleeding, anemia, injection site reactions (e.g., pain, bruising, hematomas), ↓ platelets (thrombocytopenia, including HIT) **MONITORING** Platelets, Hgb, Hct, SCr Routine monitoring for efficacy is not required due to more predictable anticoagulant response than UFH If monitoring is needed, anti-Xa levels are used, not aPTT. Anti-Xa level monitoring is recommended in pregnancy and may be useful in renal insufficiency, obesity, low body weight, pediatrics, older adults Obtain peak anti-Xa level 4 hours post SC dose; target range varies based on dosing frequency (once vs. twice daily) and indication (VTE treatment vs. prophylaxis) **NOTES** Antidote: protamine (see Antidotes and Reversal section) HIT antibodies have cross-sensitivity with LMWHs Do not expel air bubble from syringe prior to injection (can cause loss of drug) Do not administer IM Store at room temperature
Dalteparin *(Fragmin)*	**Prophylaxis of VTE** 2,500-5,000 units SC daily **Treatment of UA/NSTEMI** 120 units/kg (max 10,000 units) SC Q12H	

UFH/LMWH DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Most drug interactions are due to additive effects with other drugs that can ↑ bleeding risk (other anticoagulants, antiplatelet drugs, some herbal supplements, NSAIDs, SSRIs, SNRIs, fibrinolytics). See the Drug Interactions chapter.

HEPARIN-INDUCED THROMBOCYTOPENIA

Heparin-induced thrombocytopenia (HIT) is an immune-mediated IgG drug reaction that has a high risk of venous and arterial thrombosis. The immune system forms antibodies against heparin bound to platelet factor 4 (PF4); the antibodies then join with heparin and PF4 to create a complex, which binds to the Fc receptors on platelets. This causes platelet activation and a release of pro-coagulant microparticles.

HIT is a prothrombotic state and, if left untreated, can cause many complications, including heparin-induced thrombocytopenia and thrombosis (HITT). HITT leads to amputations, post-thrombotic syndrome and/or death. The estimated incidence of HIT is ~5% of patients exposed to heparin for more than four days. It is lower with a shorter duration of treatment.

In patients with thrombocytopenia on heparin therapy, the probability of HIT can be assessed by calculating the 4 Ts score, which includes an evaluation of the following:

- Thrombocytopenia: an unexplained > 50% drop in platelet count from baseline.
- Timing of platelet count drop: the typical onset of HIT occurs 5 – 10 days after the start of heparin or within hours if a patient has been exposed to heparin within the past three months.
- Thrombosis: a new suspected or confirmed thrombosis or skin lesions that are necrotizing or non-necrotizing.
- Other causes: ruling out (or inability to identify) other probable causes of thrombocytopenia.

If there is a compatible clinical picture of HIT, a heparin-PF4 antibody enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA) test, an immunoassay, is completed; results may be confirmed with a functional assay (e.g., serotonin release assay, heparin-induced platelet aggregation assay).

MANAGEMENT OF HIT COMPLICATED BY THROMBOSIS (HITT)

- If HIT is suspected or confirmed, stop all forms of heparin and LMWH, including heparin flushes and heparin-coated catheters.
- Because HIT is a prothrombotic state, an alternate form of anticoagulation is essential.
  - A rapid-acting non-heparin anticoagulant (e.g., argatroban) is used for the immediate treatment of HIT.
  - Patients on warfarin should have the warfarin discontinued and reversed with vitamin K because warfarin creates a transient hypercoagulable state that increases the risk of microvascular thrombosis (e.g., warfarin-induced limb gangrene and necrosis) in HIT patients.
- Do not start or restart warfarin until the platelets have recovered to ≥ 150,000 cells/mm^3. Warfarin should be started at lower doses (5 mg maximum) and overlapped with a non-heparin anticoagulant for a minimum of five days and until the INR is within the target range for at least 24 hours (i.e., as measured on two consecutive days).
  - Argatroban can falsely elevate the INR; the value must be interpreted cautiously if argatroban is given with warfarin.
- Fondaparinux, apixaban and rivaroxaban are used off-label for HIT.
- If urgent cardiac surgery or PCI is required, bivalirudin is the preferred anticoagulant.

FACTOR Xa INHIBITORS

Apixaban *(Eliquis)*, rivaroxaban *(Xarelto) and* edoxaban *(Savaysa)* are oral direct factor Xa inhibitors. Fondaparinux, an injectable pentasaccharide, binds to antithrombin (AT) thus indirectly inhibiting factor Xa.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/ MONITORING
Oral Direct Factor Xa Inhibitors		
Apixaban *(Eliquis)* Tablet *Eliquis DVT/PE Starter Pack:* 30-day blister pack (for DVT/PE treatment) Missed Dose: Take immediately on the same day, then resume twice daily dosing; the dose should not be doubled to make up for a missed dose	**Nonvalvular AF (stroke prophylaxis)** 5 mg BID If patient has at least 2 of the following: age ≥ 80 years, body weight ≤ 60 kg or SCr ≥ 1.5 mg/dL, then give 2.5 mg BID **Treatment of DVT/PE** Initial: 10 mg BID × 7 days, then 5 mg BID Extended phase (after ≥ 6 months of initial treatment): 2.5 mg BID **Prophylaxis for DVT (after knee/hip replacement)** 2.5 mg BID (for 12 days after knee or 35 days after hip replacement); give first dose 12-24 hours after surgery	**BOXED WARNINGS** All: patients receiving neuraxial anesthesia (epidural, spinal) or undergoing spinal puncture are at risk of hematomas and subsequent paralysis Premature discontinuation ↑ risk of thrombotic events Edoxaban only: reduced efficacy in nonvalvular AF patients with CrCl > 95 mL/min; do not use **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Active pathological bleeding **WARNINGS** Not recommended with prosthetic heart valves or triple-positive antiphospholipid syndrome (i.e., all 3 antiphospholipid antibodies are positive), avoid in patients with moderate to severe hepatic impairment **SIDE EFFECTS** Generally well-tolerated, unless bleeding occurs Edoxaban: rash, ↑ LFTs **MONITORING** Hgb, Hct, SCr, LFTs; no monitoring of efficacy required **NOTES** Antidote for apixaban or rivaroxaban: andexanet alfa *(Andexxa)* All: can be crushed and put on applesauce or suspended in water to administer by NG tube Apixaban only: can be crushed and mixed with D5W or apple juice **Elective Surgery** Depending on renal function and risk for bleeding complications, discontinue 24 – 72 hours prior to procedure
Rivaroxaban *(Xarelto)* Tablet, oral suspension *Xarelto Starter Pack:* 30-day blister pack containing 15 mg and 20 mg tablets (for DVT/PE treatment) Missed Dose: Administer as soon as possible on the same day as follows: If taking 15 mg twice daily: take immediately to ensure intake of 30 mg/day (in this instance, two 15 mg tablets may be taken at once); then resume regular schedule on the following day If taking 10, 15 or 20 mg once daily: take immediately on the same day; otherwise skip	Doses ≥ 15 mg must be taken with food; doses ≤ 10 mg can be taken without regard to meals **Nonvalvular AF (stroke prophylaxis)** CrCl > 50 mL/min: 20 mg daily with evening meal CrCl 15-50 mL/min: 15 mg daily with evening meal CrCl < 15 mL/min: 15 mg daily (per manufacturer); limited data **Treatment of DVT/PE** Initial: 15 mg BID × 21 days, then 20 mg daily with food Extended phase (after ≥ 6 months of initial treatment): 10 mg daily CrCl 15-30 mL/min: use cautiously due to limited data CrCl < 15 mL/min: avoid use **Prophylaxis for DVT (after knee/hip replacement) and VTE (in acutely ill medical patients)** 10 mg PO daily for 12 days (knee replacement), 35 days (hip replacement) or 31 to 39 days (acutely ill medical patients) Give first dose 6-10 hours after knee/hip replacement surgery CrCl 15-30 mL/min: use cautiously due to limited data CrCl < 15 mL/min: avoid use **Reduction in the risk of major CVD events in CAD/PAD** 2.5 mg BID in combination with low-dose aspirin	
Edoxaban *(Savaysa)* Tablet Missed Dose: Take immediately on the same day; the dose should not be doubled to make up for a missed dose	**Nonvalvular AF (stroke prophylaxis)** CrCl > 95 mL/min: do not use CrCl 51-95 mL/min: 60 mg daily CrCl 15-50 mL/min: 30 mg daily CrCl < 15 mL/min: not recommended **Treatment of DVT/PE** 60 mg daily, start after 5-10 days of parenteral anticoagulation CrCl 15-50 mL/min, body weight ≤ 60 kg or on certain P-gp inhibitors: 30 mg daily CrCl < 15 mL/min: not recommended	

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Injectable Indirect Factor Xa Inhibitor (SC)		
Fondaparinux *(Arixtra)* Prefilled syringes: 2.5 mg/0.5 mL 5 mg/0.4 mL 7.5 mg/0.6 mL 10 mg/0.8 mL Store at room temperature	**Prophylaxis of VTE** ≥ 50 kg: 2.5 mg SC daily < 50 kg: contraindicated **Treatment of VTE** < 50 kg: 5 mg SC daily 50-100 kg: 7.5 mg SC daily > 100 kg: 10 mg SC daily **Both Indications** CrCl 30-50 mL/min: use caution CrCl < 30 mL/min: contraindicated	**BOXED WARNING** Patients receiving neuraxial anesthesia (epidural, spinal) or undergoing spinal puncture are at risk of hematomas and subsequent paralysis **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Severe renal impairment (CrCl < 30 mL/min), active major bleed, bacterial endocarditis, thrombocytopenia with positive test for anti-platelet antibodies in presence of fondaparinux **SIDE EFFECTS** Bleeding (e.g., epistaxis, bruising, gingival, GI), anemia, local injection site reactions (rash, pruritus, bruising), thrombocytopenia **MONITORING** Platelets, Hgb, Hct, SCr, anti-Xa levels (3 hrs post-dose; routine monitoring not required) **NOTES** Do not expel air bubble from syringe prior to injection No antidote Do not administer IM

FACTOR Xa INHIBITOR DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Monitor for additive effects with other drugs that can ↑ bleeding risk (antiplatelet drugs, some herbals, NSAIDs, SSRIs, SNRIs, fibrinolytics). See the Drug Interactions chapter.
- Apixaban is a substrate of CYP450 3A4 (major) and P-gp. Avoid use with strong dual inducers of CYP3A4 and P-gp (e.g., carbamazepine, phenytoin, rifampin, St. John's wort). For patients receiving doses > 2.5 mg BID, the dose of apixaban should be decreased by 50% when coadministered with drugs that are strong dual inhibitors of CYP3A4 and P-gp (e.g., itraconazole, ketoconazole, ritonavir). For patients taking 2.5 mg BID, avoid these strong dual inhibitors.
- Rivaroxaban is a substrate of CYP3A4 (major) and P-gp. Avoid use with drugs that are combined P-gp and strong CYP3A4 inducers (e.g., carbamazepine, phenytoin, rifampin, St. John's wort) or combined P-gp and strong CYP3A4 inhibitors (e.g., itraconazole, ketoconazole, ritonavir, lopinavir/ritonavir, conivaptan). The benefit must outweigh the potential risks in patients who have a CrCl 15 – 80 mL/min and are receiving combined P-gp and moderate CYP3A4 inhibitors (e.g., diltiazem, verapamil, dronedarone, erythromycin).
- Edoxaban is a substrate of P-gp; avoid use with rifampin. When treating DVT/PE, reduce dose to 30 mg daily with verapamil, macrolides (azithromycin, clarithromycin, erythromycin) and oral itraconazole or ketoconazole.
- Cobicistat can increase exposure to the factor Xa inhibitors. Rivaroxaban should not be used with any medications that contain cobicistat. Recommendations are product-specific for the other anticoagulants.

DIRECT THROMBIN INHIBITORS

These agents directly inhibit thrombin (factor IIa); they bind to the active site of free and clot-associated thrombin.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Oral Direct Thrombin Inhibitor		
Dabigatran *(Pradaxa)* Capsule, oral packet (pellets) Missed Dose: Take immediately unless it is within 6 hours of next scheduled dose; the dose should not be doubled to make up for a missed dose	**Nonvalvular AF (stroke prophylaxis)** 150 mg BID CrCl 15-30 mL/min: 75 mg BID CrCl < 15 mL/min: avoid use **Treatment of DVT/PE and reduction in risk of recurrent DVT/PE** 150 mg BID, start after 5-10 days of parenteral anticoagulation CrCl ≤ 30 mL/min: avoid use **Prophylaxis of DVT/PE following hip replacement surgery** 110 mg on day 1, then 220 mg daily CrCl ≤ 30 mL/min: avoid use	**BOXED WARNINGS** Patients receiving neuraxial anesthesia (epidural, spinal) or undergoing spinal puncture are at risk of hematomas and subsequent paralysis Premature discontinuation ↑ risk of thrombotic events **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Active pathological bleeding, treatment of patients with mechanical prosthetic heart valves **WARNINGS** Not recommended for triple-positive antiphospholipid syndrome **SIDE EFFECTS** Dyspepsia, gastritis-like symptoms, bleeding (including GI bleeding) **MONITORING** Hgb, Hct, SCr; no monitoring of efficacy required **NOTES** Antidote: idarucizumab *(Praxbind)* Protect from moisture; dispense in original container and discard 4 months after opening Blister packs are good until the date on the pack Swallow capsules whole (do not break, chew, crush or open); do not administer by NG tube Can ↑ aPTT, PT/INR Discontinue if undergoing invasive surgery (1-2 days before if CrCl ≥ 50 mL/min, 2-5 days before if CrCl < 50 mL/min)
Injectable Direct Thrombin Inhibitors (IV)		
Argatroban Indicated for HIT and patients undergoing PCI who are at risk for HIT **Bivalirudin *(Angiomax)*** Indicated for patients undergoing PCI, including those with HIT	**HIT** Argatroban: start at 2 mcg/kg/min, then titrate to target aPTT Max: 10 mcg/kg/min **PCI** IV bolus followed by an infusion; all are weight-based Used in patients with or at risk for HIT Argatroban: ↓ dose in hepatic impairment Bivalirudin: ↓ dose when CrCl < 30 mL/min	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Active major bleeding **SIDE EFFECTS** Bleeding (mild to severe), anemia **MONITORING** aPTT and/or activated clotting time, platelets, Hgb, Hct, hepatic function (argatroban), renal function (bivalirudin) **NOTES** No cross-reaction with HIT antibodies No antidote Argatroban can falsely ↑ INR; if starting on warfarin concurrently, dose cautiously and do not use a loading dose of warfarin

DABIGATRAN DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Dabigatran is a substrate of P-gp:
  - Avoid concurrent use with rifampin, or any P-gp inhibitor, if CrCl < 50 mL/min (or < 30 mL/min when taking dabigatran for nonvalvular AF).
  - Reduce dose to 75 mg BID if CrCl is 30 – 50 mL/min (when taking dabigatran for nonvalvular AF) and there is concurrent use of dronedarone or systemic ketoconazole.
  - Cobicistat and cobicistat-containing medications increase exposure to dabigatran. Recommendations depend on renal function and indication for dabigatran.
- Monitor for additive effects with other drugs that can ↑ bleeding risk (antiplatelet drugs, some herbals, NSAIDs, SSRIs, SNRIs, fibrinolytics).

CONVERSION BETWEEN ANTICOAGULANTS

- From warfarin to another oral anticoagulant, stop warfarin and convert to:
  - **R**ivaroxaban when INR is < 3
  - **E**doxaban when INR is ≤ 2.5
  - **A**pixaban when INR is < 2
  - **D**abigatran when INR is < 2

Remember: **READ**

- From oral Xa inhibitors (apixaban, edoxaban and rivaroxaban) to warfarin:
  - Stop Xa inhibitor. Start parenteral anticoagulant and warfarin at next scheduled dose.
  - Edoxaban only: refer to package labeling for conversion recommendations.
- From dabigatran to warfarin:
  - Start warfarin 1-3 days before stopping dabigatran (determined by renal function – refer to dabigatran labeling).

WARFARIN

Warfarin competitively inhibits the C1 subunit of the multi-unit vitamin K epoxide reductase (VKORC1) enzyme complex. This reduces the regeneration of vitamin K epoxide which decreases production of active clotting factors II, VII, IX and X and the anticoagulants protein C and S.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Warfarin *(Jantoven)* Tablet Missed Dose: Take immediately on the same day; do not double the dose the next day to make up for a missed dose	Healthy outpatients: ≤ 10 mg daily for first 2 days, then adjust dose per INR Lower doses (≤ 5 mg) for older adults, malnourished, taking drugs that can ↑ warfarin levels, liver disease, heart failure or high risk of bleeding Take at the same time each day Highly protein bound (99%)	**BOXED WARNINGS** Major or fatal bleeding **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Pregnancy (except with mechanical heart valves at high risk for thromboembolism), hemorrhagic tendencies, blood dyscrasias, malignant hypertension, noncompliance, recent or potential surgery of the eye or CNS, major regional lumbar block anesthesia or traumatic surgery resulting in large open surfaces, pericarditis or pericardial effusion, bacterial endocarditis, preeclampsia/eclampsia, possible miscarriage **WARNINGS** Tissue necrosis/gangrene, HIT (contraindicated as monotherapy in the initial treatment of active HIT), systemic atheroemboli and cholesterol microemboli (purple toe syndrome), presence of CYP2C9*2 or *3 alleles and/or polymorphism of VKORC1 gene may increase bleeding risk (routine genetic testing is not currently recommended; see Pharmacogenomics chapter) **SIDE EFFECTS** Bleeding/bruising (mild to severe), skin necrosis **MONITORING** Begin INR monitoring after the initial 2 or 3 doses, or if on a chronic, stable dose of warfarin, monitor INR every 4-12 weeks Goal INR 2-3 (target 2.5): most indications (VTE, AF, bioprosthetic valve, mechanical aortic valve, antiphospholipid syndrome) Goal INR 2.5-3.5 (target 3): high-risk indications such as a mechanical mitral valve, two mechanical heart valves or mechanical aortic valve with 1 additional risk factor (e.g., previous DVT, AF, hypercoagulable state) Hct, Hgb, signs of bleeding **NOTES** Antidote: vitamin K (see Antidotes and Reversal section for details) Dental cleanings and single tooth extraction do not generally require a change in warfarin dosing if the INR is within the therapeutic range

WARFARIN DRUG INTERACTIONS

Warfarin is a racemic mixture of two active enantiomers (R-warfarin and S-warfarin) that are metabolized by several CYP enzymes. R-warfarin is primarily metabolized via CYP3A4. S-warfarin, which is 3 – 5 times more potent than R-warfarin, is primarily metabolized via CYP2C9; this is why drugs that interact via CYP2C9 have a greater impact on the anticoagulant effect of warfarin. Despite the impact of different CYP2C9 genotypes on warfarin metabolism, routine pharmacogenomic testing is not recommended.

PHARMACOKINETIC INTERACTIONS

- Warfarin is a major substrate of CYP2C9. It is a minor substrate of 1A2, 2C19 and 3A4, and a weak inhibitor of CYP2C9 and 2C19. See Drug Interactions chapter.
- CYP inducers that can ↓ INR include phenytoin, carbamazepine, phenobarbital, rifampin (large ↓ in INR) and St. John's wort.
- CYP inhibitors that can ↑ INR include amiodarone, azole antifungals (e.g., fluconazole, ketoconazole, voriconazole), capecitabine, cimetidine, fluvastatin, fluvoxamine, metronidazole, tamoxifen, tigecycline, SMX/TMP and zafirlukast.
  - ☐ When starting amiodarone, ↓ the dose of warfarin by 30 – 50%.
  - ☐ Avoid use with tamoxifen.
- Check for CYP1A2, 2C19 and 3A4 interactions; these occur, but usually have less of an effect on INR.
- Antibiotics: penicillins, including amoxicillin, some cephalosporins, quinolones and tetracyclines can ↑ the anticoagulant effect of warfarin – monitor INR.
- Warfarin is highly protein bound. Caution is advised with other highly protein bound drugs that may displace warfarin (e.g., phenytoin, valproic acid).

PHARMACODYNAMIC DRUG INTERACTIONS

- The most common pharmacodynamic interactions are with NSAIDs, antiplatelet agents, other anticoagulants, SSRIs and SNRIs. These interactions ↑ bleeding risk, but the INR may not be increased.
- Drugs that ↑ clotting risk (e.g., estrogen and SERMs) should be discontinued if possible.

DIETARY SUPPLEMENTS/FOOD INTERACTIONS

- Concurrent warfarin use with natural products can ↑ bleeding risk or ↓ the effectiveness of warfarin with or without affecting the INR.
  - ☐ ↑ bleeding risk: the "5 Gs" (garlic, ginger, ginkgo, ginseng, glucosamine), dong quai, omega-3 fatty acids (↑ doses), vitamin E, willow bark (a plant salicylate), chamomile, cranberry, fenugreek, feverfew and saw palmetto.
  - ☐ ↓ warfarin effectiveness: green tea, coenzyme Q10 and St. John's wort.
- Alcohol consumption can affect the INR; binge drinking can ↑ bleeding and INR, while chronic consumption may ↓ INR.
- Any additions of vitamin K will ↓ the effectiveness of warfarin and the INR.
  - ☐ Check supplements and nutritional products (including enteral nutrition) for vitamin K content.
  - ☐ Counsel patients to stay consistent with the amount of vitamin K in the diet to prevent fluctuations in the INR (see Foods High in Vitamin K box below).
  - ☐ Routine vitamin K supplementation to improve INR stability is not recommended.
- Proteins from tube feeds can bind to and decrease warfarin absorption; they should be held one hour before and after warfarin administration.

FOODS HIGH IN VITAMIN K

Spinach (cooked)	Turnip greens
Broccoli	Green onion
Brussel sprouts	Swiss chard
Collard greens	Endive
Kale	Parsley

Others: asparagus, cabbage, canola oil, cauliflower, coleslaw, lettuce (red leaf or butterhead), watercress, some teas

WARFARIN USE – KEY POINTS

- Acute DVT/PE treatment: start warfarin while the patient is still receiving a parenteral anticoagulant and continue both anticoagulants for a minimum of 5 days and until the INR is ≥ 2 for at least 24 hours (i.e., as measured on two consecutive days). Both criteria must be met.
- For patients with stable therapeutic INRs presenting with a single subtherapeutic (low) INR value, routinely bridging with UFH or LMWH is not recommended.
- For patients with previously stable therapeutic INRs who present with a single out-of-range INR of ≤ 0.5 below or above the therapeutic range, continue current dose and obtain another INR within 1 – 2 weeks.
- For patients with consistently stable INRs on warfarin therapy, INR testing can be done up to every 12 weeks rather than every 4 weeks.
- Each strength of warfarin is associated with a specific tablet color (see Study Tip Gal below).

WARFARIN TABLET COLORS

Pink (1 mg)
Lavender (2 mg)
Green (2.5 mg)
Brown/Tan (3 mg)
Blue (4 mg)
Peach (5 mg)
Teal (6 mg)
Yellow (7.5 mg)
White (10 mg)

Remember:

Please **L**et **G**reg **B**rown **B**ring **P**eaches **T**o **Y**our **W**edding

ANTIDOTES FOR REVERSAL

Bleeding is the major adverse effect of anticoagulants. Bleeding can be serious and fatal. Anticoagulation needs to be reversed if a patient experiences life-threatening bleeding or requires surgery.

Drug-specific antidotes include protamine, phytonadione (vitamin K), andexanet alfa and idarucizumab. Prothrombin complex concentrates (PCCs) are indicated for the urgent reversal of warfarin and are sometimes used (off-label) for reversal of factor Xa inhibitors. If PCCs are used for factor Xa inhibitor reversal, monitoring of coagulation tests (e.g., PT, PTT, anti-Xa) to assess reversal is not useful and is not recommended.

ANTIDOTE	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
For UFH/LMWH reversal		
Protamine sulfate Injection 10 mg/mL (5 mL, 25 mL)	**For IV UFH reversal** 1 mg protamine will reverse ~100 units of heparin Since UFH has a very short half-life, reverse the amount of heparin given in the last 2-2.5 hours Max dose: 50 mg **For LMWH reversal** Enoxaparin given within the last 8 hours: 1 mg protamine per 1 mg of enoxaparin Enoxaparin given > 8 hours ago: 0.5 mg protamine per 1 mg of enoxaparin Dalteparin: 1 mg protamine for each 100 anti-Xa units of dalteparin	**BOXED WARNINGS** Hypersensitivity: hypotension, cardiovascular collapse, non-cardiogenic pulmonary edema, pulmonary vasoconstriction **SIDE EFFECTS** Hypotension, bradycardia, flushing, anaphylaxis **MONITORING** aPTT or anti-Xa levels, cardiac monitoring (ECG, BP, HR) **NOTES** Rapid IV infusion causes hypotension Administer slow IV push (max rate of 50 mg over 10 minutes) Will not fully neutralize LMWHs (max. ~60-75%)

ANTIDOTE	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
For reversal of the factor Xa inhibitors apixaban and rivaroxaban		
Andexanet alfa *(Andexxa)* Injection	Bolus, followed by infusion Dosing is specific to the Xa inhibitor, including the dose and when last taken	**BOXED WARNINGS** Thromboembolic risks, ischemic events, cardiac arrest, sudden death **SIDE EFFECTS** Injection site reaction, UTI, pneumonia, antibody development **NOTES** Not indicated for reversal of factor Xa inhibitors other than apixaban and rivaroxaban (though may be used off-label)
For dabigatran reversal		
Idarucizumab *(Praxbind)* Injection 2.5 g/50 mL single-use vial	5 grams IV (given as 2 separate 2.5 gram doses no more than 15 minutes apart)	**WARNINGS** Thromboembolic risks, risk of serious adverse reactions due to sorbitol excipient **SIDE EFFECTS** Headache, constipation, hypersensitivity reaction **NOTES** Do not confuse with idarubicin
For warfarin reversal		
Vitamin K or phytonadione *(Mephyton)* 5 mg tablets 1 mg/0.5 mL, 10 mg/mL injection	1-10 mg PO/IV IV: to ↓ risk of anaphylaxis, dilute dose in a minimum of 50 mL of compatible solution and administer using an infusion pump over at least 20 minutes (rate not to exceed 1 mg/min)	**BOXED WARNINGS** Severe reactions resembling hypersensitivity reactions (e.g., anaphylaxis) have occurred rarely during or immediately after IV (even with proper dilution and rate of administration) and IM administration; some patients had no previous exposure to phytonadione **SIDE EFFECTS** Anaphylaxis, flushing, rash, dizziness **NOTES** Requires light protection during administration SC route not recommended due to variable absorption; IM route not recommended due to risk of hematoma Orlistat and mineral oil ↓ absorption of PO vitamin K See specific dosing recommendations in Warfarin Reversal section

ANTIDOTE	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Four Factor Prothrombin Complex Concentrate (Human) ***(Kcentra, Balfaxar)*** Injection Factors II, VII, IX, X, Protein C, Protein S	IV dose is based on units of Factor IX per kg of body weight and patient's INR Do not repeat dose	**BOXED WARNINGS** Arterial and venous thromboembolic complications have been reported **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Known HIT (contains heparin); disseminated intravascular coagulation (DIC) (*Kcentra* only); IgA deficiency with antibodies to IgA (*Balfaxar* only) **WARNINGS** Made from human blood and may carry risk of transmitting infectious agents **SIDE EFFECTS** Headache, N/V/D, asthenia, hypotension, hypokalemia, thrombotic events **NOTES** Administer with vitamin K Do not let drug back-up into line as it will clot Allow to reach room temperature prior to administration if refrigerated Each vial has a different potency of coagulation factors; actual potency is stated on the vial
Three Factor Prothrombin Complex Concentrate (Human) *(Profilnine)* Off-label	Dose based on weight and INR Infuse IV slowly Given with fresh frozen plasma (FFP) or factor VIIa	**WARNINGS** Contains factors II, IX and X but low or nontherapeutic levels of factor VII and should not be confused with *Kcentra*, which contains therapeutic levels of factor VII Made from human blood and may carry risk of transmitting infectious agents (e.g., viruses) **SIDE EFFECTS** Chills, fever, flushing, nausea, headache, risk of thrombosis **NOTES** Administer via slow infusion and give antihistamine to minimize side effects Administer with vitamin K
Factor VIIa Recombinant ***(NovoSeven RT,*** *Sevenfact)* Off-label	10-20 mcg/kg IV bolus over 5 minutes	**BOXED WARNINGS** Serious thrombotic events

WARFARIN REVERSAL

Elevated INRs are concerning because they indicate an increased risk of bleeding. However, if clinically significant bleeding is present, warfarin reversal with vitamin K should be considered regardless of the INR. Vitamin K can be used alone or with other medications (e.g., PCC) for life-threatening bleeding.

Oral formulations of vitamin K (generally at doses of 2.5 – 5 mg) are preferred for reversal in patients without significant or major bleeding. Intravenous vitamin K should only be used when the patient is experiencing serious bleeding. IV injections of vitamin K are reported to cause anaphylaxis in 3 out of 100,000 patients; the risk can be reduced with dilution and slow infusion.

Avoid SC injections (due to a slow onset and a variable response) and the intramuscular (IM) route (due to the risk of hematoma formation).

USE OF VITAMIN K FOR OVERANTICOAGULATION

SYMPTOMS/INR VALUE	WHAT TO DO
INR above therapeutic range but < 4.5 without bleeding	Reduce or skip warfarin dose. Monitor INR. Resume warfarin when INR therapeutic. Dose reduction may not be needed if ↑ INR is due to transient or reversible factors.
Supratherapeutic INR of 4.5-10 without bleeding	Routine use of vitamin K is not recommended if no evidence of bleeding. Hold 1-2 doses of warfarin. Monitor INR. Resume warfarin at lower dose when INR therapeutic. Oral vitamin K can be used if urgent surgery is needed (≤ 5 mg, with additional 1-2 mg in 24 hours if needed) or bleeding risk is high (1-2.5 mg).
INR > 10 without bleeding	Hold warfarin. Give oral vitamin K 2.5-5 mg even if not bleeding. Monitor INR. Resume warfarin at a lower dose when INR is therapeutic.
Major bleeding	Hold warfarin. Give vitamin K 5-10 mg by slow IV injection and four-factor PCC. PCC suggested over fresh frozen plasma (FFP) due to risk of allergic reaction, infection transmission, longer preparation time, slower onset and higher volume.

PERIOPERATIVE MANAGEMENT OF PATIENTS ON WARFARIN

- Stop warfarin therapy approximately five days before major surgery. In patients with a mechanical heart valve, AF or VTE at high risk for thromboembolism (e.g., AF with CHA_2DS_2-VASc ≥ 7), bridging therapy with LMWH or UFH is recommended (bridging means using therapeutic doses of LMWH or UFH for a short period to prevent clotting). Discontinue therapeutic-dose SC LMWH 24 hours before surgery; stop IV UFH 4 – 6 hours before surgery. Patients at low risk for thromboembolism do not require bridging.
- If INR is still elevated 1 – 2 days before surgery, give low-dose (1 – 2 mg) oral vitamin K.
- If reversal of warfarin is needed in a patient requiring an urgent surgical procedure, give low-dose (2.5 – 5 mg) IV or oral vitamin K.
- Resume warfarin therapy 12 – 24 hours after the surgery, when there is adequate hemostasis.

VENOUS THROMBOEMBOLISM (VTE)

DIAGNOSIS

Symptoms of a DVT include pain in the affected limb and unilateral lower extremity swelling, while symptoms of a PE include shortness of breath and chest pain. DVTs can be diagnosed with an ultrasound, MRI or venography. A D-dimer (lab test) can aid in the diagnosis. If a PE is suspected, it is diagnosed with a pulmonary CT angiogram.

VTE PROPHYLAXIS

Risk factors for the development of VTE are below.

RISK FACTORS FOR VENOUS THROMBOEMBOLISM

Modifiable:	Non-modifiable:
Acute medical illness	Increasing age
Immobility	Cancer or chemotherapy
Medications (e.g., SERMs, drugs containing estrogen, erythropoiesis-stimulating agents)	Previous VTE
Obesity (BMI ≥ 30 kg/m^2)	Inherited or acquired thrombophilia (e.g., antithrombin deficiency, factor V Leiden, antiphospholipid syndrome, protein C or S deficiency)
Pregnancy and postpartum period	Certain disease states (e.g., heart failure, nephrotic syndrome, respiratory failure)
Recent surgery or major trauma	

Various guidelines provide recommendations for the prevention of VTE depending on the patient's level of risk. UFH, LMWHs, fondaparinux, rivaroxaban, apixaban and dabigatran are all approved for VTE prophylaxis. If patients have a contraindication to anticoagulants (such as an active bleed) or have a high risk for bleeding, they will need non-drug alternatives to prevent VTE. These options include intermittent pneumatic compression (IPC) devices or graduated compression stockings.

For long-distance travelers at risk for VTE (see Study Tip Gal), the following recommendations will ↓ VTE risk: frequent ambulation, calf muscle exercises, sitting in an aisle seat and using graduated compression stockings with 15 – 30 mmHg of pressure at the ankle during travel. Aspirin or anticoagulants should not be used.

VTE TREATMENT

A VTE that is caused by surgery or a reversible risk factor should be treated for three months. Extending the duration of therapy is recommended if the VTE is unprovoked (unknown cause), as long as the patient's bleeding risk is low-to-moderate; this extended phase of therapy should utilize reduced doses of apixaban or rivaroxaban that are approved for this purpose (see drug table); full-dose anticoagulants are also acceptable if unable to utilize the medications approved at reduced doses. If the risk of bleeding is high, limit the treatment to three months. If a patient has two unprovoked VTE episodes, long-term treatment can be considered. Estrogen-containing medications and selective estrogen receptor modulators (SERMs) are contraindicated in patients with history of, or current, VTE and should be discontinued.

- For patients without cancer, dabigatran and the oral factor Xa inhibitors (rivaroxaban, apixaban and edoxaban) are preferred over warfarin for the treatment of a DVT or a PE.
- For patients with cancer, the oral factor Xa inhibitors are preferred over other oral anticoagulants and LMWH.
- In patients with an unprovoked DVT or PE who are stopping anticoagulation, aspirin is recommended to prevent recurrence (if there are no contraindications).

ATRIAL FIBRILLATION/FLUTTER

Patients with atrial fibrillation (AF) or atrial flutter can form clots in the heart (e.g., left atrial thrombus) that can travel to the brain and cause a cardioembolic stroke or transient ischemic attack (TIA). Stroke prevention is an important goal in patients with AF/atrial flutter (see Arrhythmias chapter).

Some patients with AF will undergo cardioversion (electrical or pharmacologic) to attempt to regain normal sinus rhythm. The recommended anticoagulation treatments to prevent atrial thrombus and subsequent stroke due to this procedure are shown in the box to the right.

ANTICOAGULATION FOR PATIENTS WITH AF WHO WILL UNDERGO CARDIOVERSION

- AF > 48 hours or unknown duration: anticoagulation for at least 3 weeks prior to and 4 weeks after cardioversion (when normal sinus rhythm is restored). If using warfarin, target an INR of 2–3.
- AF ≤ 48 hours duration undergoing elective cardioversion: start full therapeutic anticoagulation at presentation, perform cardioversion, and continue full anticoagulation for at least 4 weeks while patient is in normal sinus rhythm.

For patients who remain in AF, the need for chronic anticoagulation therapy is based on stroke risk. Patients with AF and a mechanical heart valve have the highest risk for clotting/stroke and should receive anticoagulation therapy. Patients with AF and a mechanical heart valve or mitral stenosis should only receive warfarin, as factor Xa inhibitors and DTIs are not approved for this population. The majority of patients with AF do not have heart valve involvement (previously referred to as nonvalvular AF) and should use the CHA_2DS_2-VASc scoring system to estimate stroke risk and guide therapy (see Study Tip Gal and table below).

CHA_2DS_2-VASc SCORING SYSTEM

Calculate the patient's risk for stroke based on the number of risk factors present, then select the recommended therapy. The higher the score, the greater the stroke risk.

CHA_2DS_2-VASc SCORING SYSTEM

Calculate score based on risk factors (see table for treatment based on score).

C – CHF	1
H – HTN	1
A_2 – Age ≥ 75 Years	2
D – Diabetes	1
S_2 – Prior Stroke/TIA or Thromboembolism	2
V – Vascular Disease (prior MI, PAD, aortic plaque)	1
A – Age 65-74 Years	1
Sc – Sex Category, Female	1

CHA_2DS_2-VASc SCORE	RISK OF STROKE	RECOMMENDED THERAPY
0 (males) 1 (females)	Low	No anticoagulation recommended.
1 (males) 2 (females)	Moderate	Oral anticoagulation may be considered.*
≥ 2 (males) ≥ 3 (females)	High	Oral anticoagulation is recommended. Non-vitamin K oral anticoagulant (DOAC**) is recommended over warfarin.

**Additional factors (e.g., AF burden, obesity, poorly controlled hypertension) should be considered.*
***DOAC: apixaban, rivaroxaban, edoxaban, dabigatran*

HAS-BLED SCORING SYSTEM

The HAS-BLED scoring system assesses bleeding risk in patients with AF requiring anticoagulation for stroke prevention. The decision to anticoagulate is individualized based on comparing the risk of stroke (CHA_2DS_2-VASc) to the risk of bleeding (HAS-BLED). The number of risk factors determines the score; the higher the score, the greater the risk of bleeding.

HAS-BLED SCORING SYSTEM

Calculate score based on risk factors.

H – HTN (SBP > 160 mmHg)	1
A – Abnormal Liver or Kidney Function	1-2
S – Prior Stroke	1
B – Bleeding Tendency or Predisposition	1
L – Labile INR (if on warfarin)	1
E – Elderly (age > 65 years)	1
D – Drugs (aspirin, NSAIDs), Excess Alcohol	1-2

ANTICOAGULATION IN PREGNANCY

For prevention and treatment of VTE in pregnant females, LMWH is preferred. Pneumatic compression devices can be used alone or with LMWH in select patients. Since warfarin is teratogenic, females who require chronic warfarin therapy for mechanical heart valves or inherited thrombophilias are generally converted to LMWH during pregnancy. If necessary, they may be switched back to warfarin after the 13th week of pregnancy (i.e., after the first trimester), then back to LMWH closer to delivery. When LMWH is used in pregnancy, anti-Xa levels are recommended to monitor therapy. The oral factor Xa inhibitors and direct thrombin inhibitors have not been adequately studied in pregnancy and are not recommended.

KEY COUNSELING POINTS

See the Drug Formulations and Patient Counseling chapter for counseling language/layman's terminology.

FOR ALL ANTICOAGULANTS

- Can cause serious and life-threatening bleeding.
- Tell providers and dentists that you are using this medication before any surgery is performed.
- Call your healthcare provider right away if you fall or injure yourself, especially if you hit your head.
- Avoid alcohol.
- Many drug interactions.
- Missed dose: take as soon as possible on the same day. Do not double the dose the next day to make up for a missed dose.

DABIGATRAN

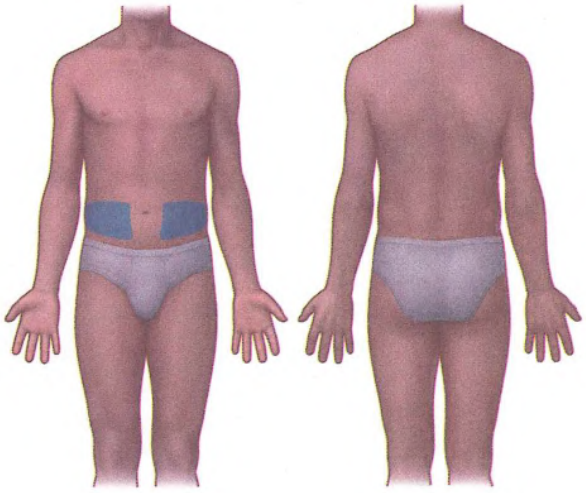
- Take with a full glass of water; swallow capsules whole.
- Can cause dyspepsia.
- Only open one bottle of dabigatran at a time. After opening a bottle, use within four months.
- Keep dabigatran in the original bottle or blister package. Do not put dabigatran in pill boxes or pill organizers.
- Missed dose: if your next dose is less than six hours away, skip the missed dose.

RIVAROXABAN

- Atrial fibrillation: take with the evening meal.
- Blood clots in the veins of your legs or in the lungs: take once or twice daily, as prescribed, with food at the same time each day.
- Missed dose: if taking 15 mg twice daily, can take two doses at the same time to make up for the missed dose.

ENOXAPARIN

- Subcutaneous injection: choose an area on the right or left side of your abdomen, at least two inches from the belly button (see image). Wash your hands and clean the site.



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- Remove the needle cap by pulling it straight off the syringe. Do not twist the cap off as this can bend the needle.
- Do not expel the air bubble in the syringe prior to injection unless your healthcare provider has advised you to do so.
- Hold the syringe like a pencil. Pinch an inch of skin to make a fold. Insert the full length of the needle straight down at a 90-degree angle into the skin.
- Press the plunger with your thumb until the syringe is empty.
- Pull the needle straight out at the same angle that it was inserted, and release the skin fold.
- Point the needle down and away from yourself and others, and push down on the plunger to activate the safety shield.
- Do not rub the site of injection as this can lead to bruising. Place the used syringe in a sharps collector.

WARFARIN

- Take at the same time every day.
- Ask your pharmacist if your tablet looks different.
- Can rarely cause:
  - ☐ Purple toe syndrome (painful toes and purple discoloration).
  - ☐ Death of skin tissue (with pain).
- Frequent blood monitoring required (INR).
- Consistent intake of vitamin K required (commonly found in green leafy vegetables).

Select Guidelines/References

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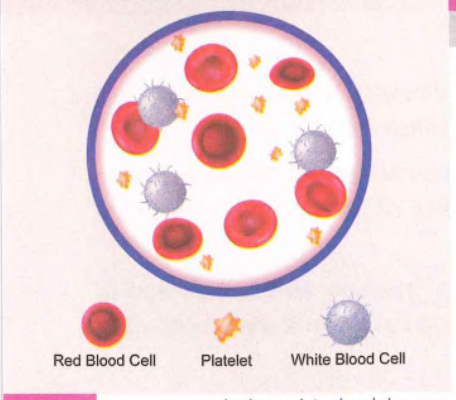

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CHAPTER 35

ANEMIA

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= Study Tip Gal = Key Drugs Guy

BACKGROUND

Anemia is the most common blood disorder worldwide and it affects more than 3 million Americans. Anemia is a decrease in red blood cells (RBCs), hemoglobin (Hgb) and/or hematocrit (Hct) below the normal range for age and sex.

- Hgb is an iron-rich protein found in RBCs that carries oxygen from the lungs to the tissues.
- Hct is the percent of RBC volume compared to total blood volume.
- Reticulocytes (immature RBCs) are formed in the bone marrow where they take up Hgb and iron before being released into circulation. After 1 – 2 days, reticulocytes develop into erythrocytes (mature RBCs), which have a lifespan of about 120 days. Erythrocytes are removed from circulation by macrophages, mainly in the spleen.

Determination of the underlying cause of anemia is essential. Anemia can occur due to impaired RBC or Hgb production, increased RBC destruction (hemolysis) or blood loss. Impaired RBC or Hgb production can result from nutritional deficiencies (e.g., iron, folate, vitamin B12) or it can be a complication of a medical disorder, such as chronic kidney disease (CKD) or a malignancy. Certain genetic conditions can cause anemia due to dysfunctional RBCs (see the Sickle Cell Disease chapter).

SYMPTOMS OF ANEMIA

A decrease in Hgb or RBC count results in decreased oxygen-carrying capacity of the blood. Mild anemia is typically asymptomatic, but if anemia becomes severe or prolonged, the reduced oxygen delivery to tissues can lead to symptoms of fatigue, weakness, shortness of breath, exercise intolerance, headache, dizziness and/or pallor. In chronic anemia, the heart compensates for reduced oxygen delivery by pumping faster (tachycardia). This can increase ventricular wall mass (i.e., cause hypertrophy) and lead to heart failure.

Glossitis (an inflamed, sore tongue), koilonychia (thin, concave, spoon-shaped nails) or pica (craving and eating non-foods, such as ice or clay) can develop with iron deficiency. Patients with vitamin B12 deficiency can also develop glossitis as well as neurologic symptoms, including peripheral neuropathy, visual disturbances and psychiatric symptoms.

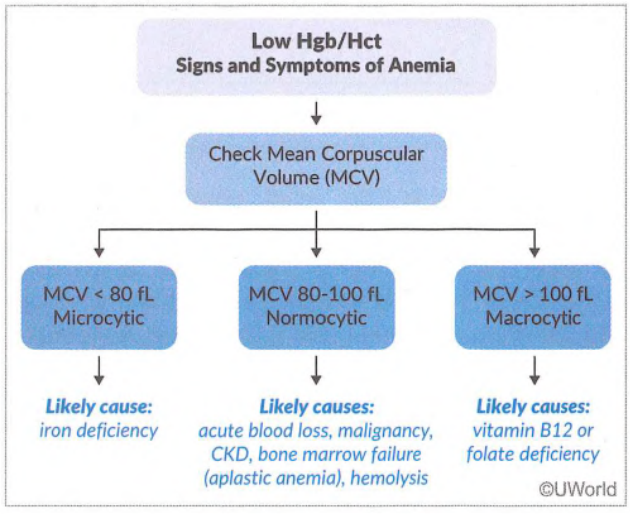
If sudden blood loss occurs, resulting in hypovolemia and hypotension, the patient can experience acute symptoms, such as chest pain, fainting, palpitations and tachycardia.

TYPES OF ANEMIA

Signs and symptoms alone are not sufficient to distinguish the type and cause of anemia, therefore laboratory tests are used.

- Mean corpuscular volume (MCV) reflects the size or average volume of RBCs, which classifies anemia as microcytic (low MCV), normocytic (normal MCV) or macrocytic (high MCV). Likely causes of anemia can be determined from this classification (see flow diagram below).

IDENTIFYING THE CAUSE OF ANEMIA



- Iron studies further evaluate microcytic anemia; they include serum iron (bound to transferrin), serum ferritin (iron stores), transferrin saturation (TSAT) (percent of transferrin binding sites occupied by iron) and total iron binding capacity (TIBC) (amount of transferrin binding sites available to bind iron, or unbound sites).
- Vitamin B12 and folate levels further evaluate macrocytic anemia. Levels of methylmalonic acid and homocysteine (which require vitamin B12 and/or folate for metabolism) may be useful in confirming a diagnosis.
- Reticulocyte count is a measure of RBC production. The count is low in untreated iron, folate or B12 deficiency anemia and with bone marrow suppression. The reticulocyte count is high with acute blood loss or hemolysis.

LABORATORY TESTS IN ANEMIA*

CBC Components
Hemoglobin (Hgb)
Hematocrit (Hct)
Red blood cell (RBC) count
Reticulocyte count

RBC Indices
Mean corpuscular volume (MCV)
Mean corpuscular hemoglobin (MCH)
Mean corpuscular hemoglobin concentration (MCHC)
Red blood cell distribution width (RDW)

Iron Studies
Serum iron
Serum ferritin
Total iron binding capacity (TIBC)
Transferrin saturation (TSAT)

Additional Tests
Serum folate
Serum vitamin B12
Methylmalonic acid
Homocysteine

**Refer to the Lab Values & Drug Monitoring chapter for normal laboratory ranges in adults.*

IRON DEFICIENCY ANEMIA

Iron deficiency is the most common nutritional deficiency in the United States. Common causes are shown in the box to the right. Dietary iron is available in two forms: heme iron (found in meat and seafood) and non-heme iron (found in nuts, beans, vegetables and fortified grains, such as cereals). Heme iron is more readily absorbed than non-heme iron. Patients who follow a vegan or vegetarian diet are more likely consume foods with non-heme iron (the less absorbable form), which can make them susceptible to iron deficiency.

Preventative measures for iron deficiency anemia (IDA) can be used for at-risk patient populations. For example, iron requirements increase during pregnancy for fetal development. Iron supplementation (~30 mg/day) is recommended, and usually included in a prenatal vitamin.

CAUSES OF IRON DEFICIENCY

Low Iron Intake
- Vegetarian or vegan diet, malnutrition

Blood Loss
- Acute (e.g., hemorrhage), chronic (e.g., heavy menses, blood donations, peptic ulcer disease, inflammatory bowel disease), drug-induced (e.g., NSAIDs, antiplatelets, anticoagulants)

Decreased Iron Absorption
- High gastric pH (e.g., use of PPIs), GI disorders (e.g., celiac disease, inflammatory bowel disease), gastrectomy, gastric bypass

Increased Iron Requirements
- Pregnancy, lactation, infants*, rapid growth (e.g., adolescence)

**See the Dietary Supplements, Natural & Complementary Medicine chapter for infant iron requirements.*

DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT OF IRON DEFICIENCY ANEMIA

The Study Tip Gal below summarizes the laboratory findings that are consistent with a diagnosis of IDA and important treatment information.

ASSESSING AND TREATING IRON DEFICIENCY ANEMIA

Laboratory Findings
- ↓ Hgb, MCV (< 80 fL), reticulocyte count, serum iron, ferritin and TSAT
- ↑ TIBC

Treatment: Oral Iron Therapy
- Common dosing: 1 tablet daily or every other day
  - There is no difference in efficacy or adverse effects between products
- Take on an empty stomach (1 hr before or 2 hrs after meals) for best absorption
- Avoid H2RAs and PPIs; separate from antacids
- Sustained-release or enteric-coated formulations cause less GI irritation but are not recommended due to poor absorption

Goals
- ↑ in Hgb after 1-2 weeks; continue treatment for 3-6 months or until iron stores return to normal

ORAL IRON

Most cases of IDA can be adequately treated with OTC oral iron supplements (many contain "fe," "fer" or "ferr" in the drug name). Higher doses of elemental iron do not result in a higher amount absorbed and can cause more adverse effects. One dose of a supplement taken daily or every other day is usually sufficient.

ELEMENTAL IRON IN ORAL PRODUCTS

Ferrous gluconate	12%
Ferrous sulfate	20%
Ferrous sulfate, dried	30%
Ferrous fumarate	33%
Carbonyl iron, polysaccharide iron complex, ferric maltol	100%

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Ferrous sulfate Tablet, elixir, oral solution, syrup	325 mg (65 mg elemental iron)	**BOXED WARNING** Accidental overdose of iron-containing products is a leading cause of fatal poisoning in children under age 6 years; keep iron out of reach of children; in the case of an accidental overdose, go to the emergency department or call a poison control center immediately (even if asymptomatic) **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Hemochromatosis, hemolytic anemia, hemosiderosis, patients receiving frequent blood transfusions **SIDE EFFECTS** Gastrointestinal effects (in up to 70% of patients): constipation (dose related), dark and tarry stools, nausea, stomach upset **MONITORING** Hgb, Hct, iron studies, reticulocyte count **NOTES** Treat constipation with a stool softener or laxative (see the Constipation & Diarrhea chapter for drugs used to treat constipation) May take with food if GI upset occurs (avoid milk products) Liquid preparations of ferrous sulfate may stain teeth The antidote for iron overdose is deferoxamine *(Desferal)*
Ferrous sulfate, dried ER tablet	160 mg (50 mg elemental iron)	
Ferrous fumarate	324 mg (106 mg elemental iron)	
Ferrous gluconate	324 mg (38 mg elemental iron)	
Carbonyl iron	90 mg (90 mg elemental iron)	
Polysaccharide iron complex Capsule, liquid	150 mg (150 mg elemental iron)	
Ferric maltol *(ACCRUFeR)* Prescription only	30 mg (30 mg elemental iron)	

Oral Iron Drug Interactions

- Antacids, H2RAs and PPIs ↓ iron absorption by ↑ gastric pH. Patients should take iron 2 hours before or 4 hours after taking antacids. H2RAs and PPIs raise gastric pH for up to 24 hours; separating the administration of these drugs from iron supplements does not improve absorption.
- Vitamin C (ascorbic acid) may minimally ↑ iron absorption by providing an acidic environment.
- Iron is a polyvalent cation that can ↓ absorption of other drugs by binding (i.e., chelating) with them in the GI tract to form nonabsorbable complexes. Separate administration from the following:
  - ☐ Quinolone and tetracycline antibiotics: take iron 2 hours before or 4 – 8 hours after the antibiotic.
  - ☐ Bisphosphonates: take iron ≥ 60 minutes after oral ibandronate and ≥ 30 minutes after alendronate or risedronate.
  - ☐ Levothyroxine: separate from iron by 4 hours.
  - ☐ Integrase strand transfer inhibitors (INSTIs): see the Human Immunodeficiency Virus chapter for details.

INTRAVENOUS (PARENTERAL) IRON

Parenteral iron increases Hgb faster than oral iron. As with oral iron, IV iron formulations demonstrate equal efficacy; choice is based on cost, formulary or insurance coverage. The total dose needed to replenish iron stores (e.g., 1,000 mg) can be provided in a single infusion, if desired. Due to the risk of more severe adverse reactions, as well as the cost of therapy, IV iron administration is typically restricted to the following patients:

- CKD on hemodialysis (most common use of IV iron) and/or receiving erythropoiesis-stimulating agents (ESAs).
- Unable to tolerate oral iron due to gastrointestinal side effects or failure of oral therapy (e.g., inflammatory bowel disease, celiac disease, certain gastric bypass procedures, *H. pylori*).
- Severe anemia (e.g., Hgb < 7 g/dL) or losing iron too fast for oral replacement (e.g., chronic blood loss).
- Patients who will not accept (e.g., for religious reasons) an RBC transfusion, which is the first-line treatment for acute blood loss or life-threatening anemia (of any cause) to achieve hemodynamic stability and prevent end-organ ischemia.

DRUG	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Iron sucrose *(Venofer)*	**BOXED WARNING** Iron dextran and ferumoxytol: serious and sometimes fatal anaphylactic reactions have occurred; a history of drug allergy or multiple drug allergies may ↑ this risk Iron dextran: all patients should be given a test dose prior to the first full therapeutic dose; fatal reactions have occurred even in patients who tolerated the test dose **WARNING** All parenteral iron products: hypersensitivity reactions (including anaphylaxis); premedication (e.g., diphenhydramine, methylprednisolone) is sometimes administered to high-risk patients **SIDE EFFECTS** Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, hypotension, dizziness, dyspnea, chest pain, muscle aches, peripheral edema, injection site reactions **MONITORING** Hgb, Hct, iron studies, reticulocyte count, vital signs, signs and symptoms of anaphylaxis **NOTES** Give by slow IV injection or infusion to ↓ the risk of hypotension All are stable in NS; *Feraheme* is stable in NS or D5W
Ferumoxytol *(Feraheme)*	
Iron dextran complex *(INFeD)*	
Ferric gluconate *(Ferrlecit)*	
Ferric carboxymaltose *(Injectafer)*	
Ferric derisomaltose *(Monoferric)*	

MACROCYTIC ANEMIA

Macrocytic anemia can be caused by vitamin B12 and/or folate deficiency. Pernicious anemia, a common cause of vitamin B12 deficiency, is an autoimmune condition caused by antibodies to intrinsic factor, which is required for vitamin B12 absorption in the small intestine; it requires lifelong parenteral vitamin B12 replacement.

Other causes of macrocytic anemia include alcohol use disorder, low intake of vitamin B12 and/or folate (e.g., vegetarian or vegan diet), decreased GI absorption (e.g., Crohn's disease, celiac disease, gastric bypass) and pregnancy. The long-term (≥ 2 years) use of metformin, H2RAs or PPIs can decrease vitamin B12 absorption.

DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT OF MACROCYTIC ANEMIA

Patients with macrocytic anemia caused by vitamin B12 and/or folate deficiency will have low Hgb and reticulocyte count and high MCV; serum levels of vitamin B12 and/or folate will also be low. Since vitamin B12 is required for methylmalonic acid and homocysteine metabolism, these accumulate when vitamin B12 is deficient. Homocysteine metabolism also requires folate, therefore homocysteine levels can be elevated in folate deficiency, but methylmalonic acid levels may be normal if there is no deficiency of vitamin B12.

Vitamin B12 deficiency can result in neurologic dysfunction, including cognitive impairment and peripheral neuropathy, which can become irreversible if untreated. The initial treatment of vitamin B12 deficiency typically involves vitamin B12 injections to bypass absorption barriers, followed by oral supplements, if appropriate. Vitamin B12 injections are recommended first-line for anyone with a severe deficiency or neurological symptoms.

Folic acid deficiency causes ulcerations of the tongue and oral mucosa and changes to skin, hair and fingernail pigmentation. Oral folic acid is usually sufficient because typical doses overcome malabsorption.

VITAMIN B12 AND FOLIC ACID

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Cyanocobalamin, vitamin B12 *(Nascobal, Physicians EZ Use B-12)* Injection, lozenge, tablet (including ER and SL forms), SL liquid, nasal spray	IM or deep SC: 100-1,000 mcg daily/weekly/monthly depending on severity of the deficiency Oral/sublingual: 1,000-2,000 mcg daily *Nascobal:* 500 mcg in one nostril once weekly	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Allergy to cobalt or vitamin B12 (intradermal test dose recommended if suspected sensitivity prior to intranasal or injectable administration) **WARNINGS** Parenteral products may contain aluminum (can accumulate and cause CNS and bone toxicity if impaired renal function) or benzyl alcohol (can cause death and "gasping syndrome" in neonates) **SIDE EFFECTS** Pain with injection Rash, polycythemia vera, pulmonary edema (all rare) **MONITORING** Hgb, Hct, vitamin B12, reticulocyte count
Folic acid, folate, vitamin B9 *(FA-8)* Tablet, capsule, injection	0.4-5 mg daily	**WARNINGS** As above for cyanocobalamin **SIDE EFFECTS** Bronchospasm, flushing, rash, pruritus, malaise (all rare) **MONITORING** Hgb, Hct, folate, reticulocyte count **NOTES** Can ↓ fosphenytoin, phenytoin, primidone and phenobarbital levels

NORMOCYTIC ANEMIA

ANEMIA OF CHRONIC DISEASE

Erythropoietin (EPO) is a hormone produced by the kidneys that stimulates the bone marrow to produce RBCs. A deficiency of EPO contributes to anemia of chronic disease (e.g., CKD, malignancy). Iron therapy and erythropoiesis-stimulating agents (ESAs) are the primary treatments for anemia of chronic disease.

The KDIGO (Kidney Disease Improving Global Outcomes) guidelines recommend iron in all patients with anemia of CKD if TSAT is ≤ 30% and ferritin is ≤ 500 ng/mL. IV iron is preferred, but patients not on hemodialysis may trial oral iron. If correctable causes of anemia are addressed and Hgb remains < 10 g/dL, an ESA may be used.

ESAs are most commonly used in patients with CKD or malignancy. They may be initiated when Hgb is < 10 g/dL and titrated based on Hgb levels. Due to the risk of death and thrombosis, the dose should be decreased or interrupted when Hgb approaches or exceeds 11 g/dL. Adequate iron stores are required for ESAs to be effective and concurrent iron replacement therapy is often needed. Vadadustat *(Vafseo)* is an oral ESA indicated for patients who have been on hemodialysis (HD) for at least three or four months. It increases erythropoietin levels and has similar boxed warnings and target Hgb levels as parenteral ESAs.

ERYTHROPOIESIS-STIMULATING AGENTS (ESAs)

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Epoetin alfa ***(Epogen, Procrit,*** *Retacrit-*biosimilar) IV, SC	**Chronic Kidney Disease** 50-100 units/kg IV or SC 3×/week **Cancer (on chemotherapy)** 150 units/kg SC 3×/week or 40,000 units SC weekly	**BOXED WARNINGS** ↑ risk of death, MI, stroke, VTE, thrombosis of vascular access Use the lowest effective dose to reduce need for blood transfusions Chronic kidney disease: ↑ risk of death, serious cardiovascular events and stroke when Hgb level > 11 g/dL Select cancers: shortened survival and ↑ risk of tumor progression or recurrence; not indicated if anticipated outcome is cure; discontinue when chemotherapy complete Perisurgery (epoetin alfa): DVT prophylaxis recommended **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Uncontrolled hypertension, pure red cell aplasia after treatment Epoetin alfa: neonates, infants, pregnancy and lactation (multidose vials contain benzyl alcohol)
Darbepoetin alfa ***(Aranesp)*** IV, SC Available as a single-dose prefilled syringe (needle included)	**Chronic Kidney Disease** HD: 0.45 mcg/kg IV or SC weekly or 0.75 mcg/kg IV or SC every 2 weeks Non-HD: 0.45 mcg/kg IV or SC every 4 weeks **Cancer (on chemotherapy)** 2.25 mcg/kg SC weekly or 500 mcg SC every 3 weeks	**WARNINGS** Hypertension, seizures, allergic reactions, skin reactions (SJS/TEN) Epoetin alfa: contains albumin from human blood (remote risk for transmission of viral diseases) **SIDE EFFECTS** Arthralgia/bone pain, fever, headache, pruritus/rash, N/V, cough, dyspnea, edema, injection site pain, dizziness **MONITORING** Hgb, Hct, TSAT, serum ferritin, BP **NOTES** IV route is recommended for patients on hemodialysis Store in the refrigerator; protect from light; do not shake; discard multidose vials 21 days after initial entry Darbepoetin half-life is 3-times longer than epoetin alfa (allows weekly administration)

DRUG-INDUCED HEMOLYTIC ANEMIA

Hemolytic anemia develops when RBCs are destroyed prematurely (i.e., before the typical 120-day lifespan). There are many possible causes; this discussion focuses on drug-induced etiologies, which can have an acute onset of severe symptoms, including typical anemia findings (e.g., fatigue, dyspnea) and those associated with RBC destruction (e.g., jaundice, dark urine, splenomegaly).

Two common mechanisms by which drug-induced hemolytic anemia occurs are:

- Immune-mediated hemolysis, where the medication binds to the RBC surface and triggers antibodies to develop that lead to RBC destruction. This can be identified with a positive direct Coombs test, which detects antibodies stuck to the surface of RBCs.
- Hemolysis in the setting of glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase (G6PD) deficiency, an inherited disorder. The G6PD enzyme protects RBCs from oxidant injury; without sufficient G6PD, RBCs hemolyze after exposure to oxidative stress. Most individuals with known G6PD deficiency do not need treatment but must avoid high-risk medications, foods (e.g., fava beans), severe stress and other known triggers. Drug-induced hemolytic anemia caused by G6PD deficiency will typically result in a negative direct Coombs test.

The Key Drugs Guy below lists medications that can cause hemolytic anemia via these mechanisms. If hemolysis develops and the patient has a positive direct Coombs test or is identified as G6PD deficient, the offending agent should be discontinued.

SELECT DRUGS THAT CAN CAUSE HEMOLYTIC ANEMIA

Immune-Mediated (+Coombs Test)	G6PD Deficiency
Penicillins	Dapsone
Cephalosporins	Methylene blue
Isoniazid	Nitrofurantoin
Levodopa	Pegloticase
Methyldopa	Rasburicase
Rifampin	Primaquine
Quinidine	Quinidine
Quinine	Quinine
Sulfonamides	Sulfonamides

KEY COUNSELING POINTS

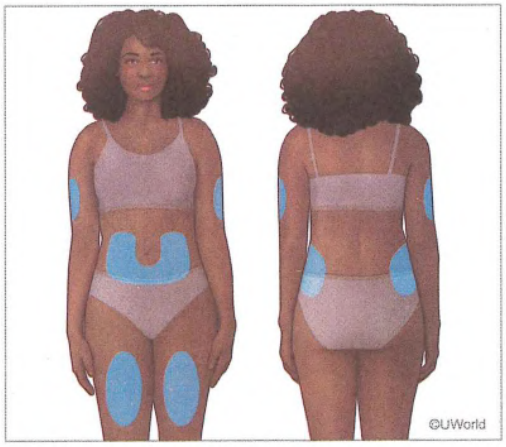
See the Drug Formulations and Patient Counseling chapter for counseling language/layman's terminology.

ORAL IRON

- Take on an empty stomach.
- Can cause:
  - ☐ Constipation.
  - ☐ Dark stools.
- Drug interactions due to:
  - ☐ High gastric pH.
  - ☐ Binding.

ESAs

- Can cause:
  - ☐ Blood clots.
  - ☐ Hypertension.
- Do not shake the vial or syringe.
- ESA injection sites:



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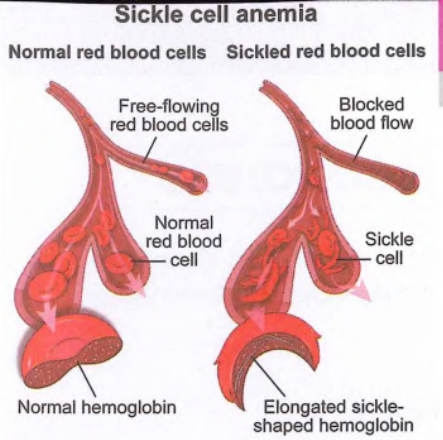

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CHAPTER 36

SICKLE CELL DISEASE

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= Key Drugs Guy

BACKGROUND

Red blood cells (RBCs) contain adult hemoglobin (HgbA) and are shaped like a donut without the hole. They have the flexibility to move through large and small blood vessels to deliver oxygen to the tissues. RBCs have a lifespan of ~120 days.

Sickle cell disease (SCD) is a group of inherited RBC disorders that most commonly affects the African American population. It results from a genetic mutation in the genes that encode hemoglobin (see the Pharmacogenomics chapter for a discussion on genetic inheritance). Patients homozygous for the sickle cell gene (i.e., they have two copies of the mutated gene) have RBCs that contain abnormal hemoglobin, called hemoglobin S (i.e., HgbS or sickle hemoglobin). This causes RBCs to be rigid with a concave "sickle" shape. Sickled RBCs hemolyze after 10 – 20 days, which causes anemia.

These irregularly shaped RBCs cannot transport oxygen effectively and they stick together, blocking smaller blood vessels (known as vascular occlusion). Symptoms of SCD develop ~2 – 3 months after birth. This is because a fetus and young infants have RBCs with fetal hemoglobin (HgbF), which blocks the sickling of RBCs. A hemoglobin electrophoresis test or high-performance liquid chromatography (HPLC) can be used to measure the amount of each Hgb (A, F and S) in the blood.

ACUTE AND CHRONIC COMPLICATIONS

Vascular occlusion prevents oxygen from reaching the tissues, causing them to become ischemic. This can lead to different sickle cell complications (see the box to the right), the most common of which is vaso-occlusive crisis (VOC), or acute pain crisis. VOC most commonly occurs in the lower back, legs, hips, abdomen and chest, and can last for days or weeks. If the pain is in the chest and there is evidence of a pulmonary infection, it is called acute chest syndrome. Acute chest syndrome is life-threatening and is the leading cause of death in SCD.

Due to the risk of stroke, females with SCD should not use estrogen; progestin-only contraceptives, levonorgestrel intrauterine devices (IUDs) and barrier methods are preferred for contraception.

The most common chronic complications of SCD are chronic pain, avascular necrosis (bone death), pulmonary hypertension and renal impairment.

SICKLE CELL DISEASE COMPLICATIONS

Acute	Chronic
Acute chest syndrome	Avascular necrosis (bone death)
Anemia	Depression and stress
Cholecystitis (gallbladder infection)	Gallstones
Infection	Leg ulcers
Multiorgan failure (kidneys, liver, lung)	Pain
Priapism (painful and prolonged erection)	Pregnancy complications (including fetal death)
Splenic sequestration	Pulmonary hypertension
Stroke	Recurrent priapism
Vaso-occlusive crisis (acute pain crisis)	Renal impairment
	Retinopathy

INFECTION RISK

A healthy spleen has several physiologic roles, including the removal of old or damaged RBCs. It aids in immune function, making and storing white blood cells and clearing some types of bacterial pathogens from the body, particularly the encapsulated organisms *Streptococcus pneumoniae, Haemophilus influenzae* and *Neisseria meningitidis*. In patients with SCD, the spleen becomes fibrotic and shrinks in size due to repetitive sickling and infarctions. This causes functional asplenia (decreased or absent spleen function), typically within the first year of life. Patients with functional asplenia are at an increased risk for serious infections; they require immunizations and prophylactic antibiotics and should seek immediate medical attention for a temperature > 101.3°F.

NON-DRUG TREATMENT

Blood transfusions protect against life-threatening complications of SCD by providing RBCs with HgbA. Stroke, acute chest syndrome and severe anemia are acute complications that warrant treatment with blood transfusions. When administering chronic monthly blood transfusions, the goal Hgb level should be no higher than 10 g/dL post-infusion. One of the risks of blood transfusions is iron overload, which can lead to hemosiderosis (excess iron that impairs organ function). Chelation therapy to remove excess iron is discussed below.

Bone marrow transplantation and autologous stem cell-based gene therapy are associated with high risks and substantial costs, so they are not widely used.

DRUG TREATMENT

Drug classes used in SCD are immunizations and antibiotics to reduce infection risk, chelation therapy to manage iron overload from blood transfusions and analgesics to control pain.

Hydroxyurea is the primary disease-modifying therapy for SCD. Other treatments include L-glutamine and crizanlizumab, which can be used alone or in combination with hydroxyurea.

IMMUNIZATIONS AND ANTIBIOTICS

Infections are a major cause of death, especially in children < 5 years of age. Sepsis and meningitis, due to *S. pneumoniae, H. influenzae, N. meningitidis* and *Salmonella* spp., can occur. The risk of infections caused by atypical organisms *(Chlamydophila* and *Mycoplasma pneumoniae)* is increased. Vaccinations are essential to prevent infection (see the Key Drugs Guy).

Prophylactic oral penicillin reduces the risk of death from invasive pneumococcal infections in young children. Infants who screen positive for SCD at birth should be initiated on twice daily penicillin and treated until age five years. If a patient undergoes surgical removal of the spleen, or if invasive pneumococcal infection develops despite penicillin prophylaxis, it should be continued indefinitely.

KEY VACCINES IN SICKLE CELL DISEASE

Routine Childhood Series

- *Haemophilus influenzae* type B (Hib)
- Pneumococcal conjugate vaccine [PCV15 *(Vaxneuvance)* or PCV20 *(Prevnar 20)]*

Additional Vaccines For Functional Asplenia

- Meningococcal conjugate vaccine (MenACWY) series plus routine boosters *(Menveo, MenQuadfi)*
- Meningococcal serogroup B *(Bexsero, Trumenba)**
- Pneumococcal vaccines – if never received as a child, give one of the following regimens**:
  - ☐ PCV20 *(Prevnar 20)* x 1,
  - ☐ PCV21 *(Capvaxive)* x 1, or
  - ☐ PCV15 *(Vaxneuvance)* x 1 followed by PPSV23 *(Pneumovax 23)* ≥ 8 weeks later

**At age ≥ 10 years*
***At age ≥ 19 years*

IRON CHELATION TREATMENT

Iron overload from chronic blood transfusions damages the liver, heart and other organs. Chelation therapy is used to remove excess iron stores from the body. Oral chelating drugs, such as deferasirox *(Exjade, Jadenu)* and deferiprone *(Ferriprox)*, are commonly used. Due to the side effect profile of both drugs, treatment is typically prescribed, dispensed and monitored by specialty clinics and pharmacies.

ANALGESICS

Mild to moderate pain can often be managed at home with rest, fluids, application of warm compresses to affected areas and the use of NSAIDs or acetaminophen. For severe pain and VOC, acute management must be guided by the patient's self-reported pain severity; outpatient analgesic use should be reviewed and an analgesic administered within 30 minutes of triage. Patients with severe pain and VOC will require IV administration of opioids or patient-controlled analgesia (PCA). Refer to the Pain chapter for a detailed discussion of analgesics.

HYDROXYUREA

Hydroxyurea is a disease-modifying drug that stimulates production of HgbF. Long-term use reduces the frequency of acute pain crises, episodes of acute chest syndrome and the need for blood transfusions. It is indicated for adults with ≥ 1 moderate-severe pain crisis or acute chest syndrome, or chronic pain affecting their quality of life. It is recommended in all pediatric patients age 9 months – 18 years regardless of disease severity.

DRUG	DOSE	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Hydroxyurea *(Droxia, Hydrea, Siklos, Xromi)* Capsule, tablet, oral solution	Start: *Droxia, Xromi:* 15 mg/kg once daily *Siklos:* 20 mg/kg once daily ↑ by 5 mg/kg/day every 8-12 weeks to a goal absolute neutrophil count (ANC) of 2,000-4,000 cells/mm^3 Max: 35 mg/kg/day Use IBW or TBW, whichever is less, when calculating daily dose Round doses to the nearest capsule size CrCl < 60 mL/min: dose adjustment required	**BOXED WARNINGS** Myelosuppression (↓ WBCs and platelets), malignancy (leukemia, skin cancer) **WARNINGS** Fetal toxicity, avoid live vaccines, skin ulcers, macrocytosis, pulmonary toxicity ↑ risk of pancreatitis, hepatotoxicity and peripheral neuropathy when used with antiretroviral drugs **SIDE EFFECTS** ↑ LFTs, uric acid, BUN and SCr; N/V/D, alopecia, hyperpigmentation or atrophy of skin and nails, low sperm counts **MONITORING** CBC with differential every 2-4 weeks during treatment initiation and titration, then every 2-3 months once a stable dose is achieved; if toxicity (ANC < 2,000 cells/mm^3, platelets < 80,000 cells/mm^3) occurs, hold hydroxyurea until the bone marrow recovers, then restart at a dose 2.5-5 mg/kg/day lower HgbF, LFTs, uric acid, renal function, baseline pregnancy test **NOTES** Contraception required for males and females during treatment and 6-12 months after discontinuation; do not breastfeed during treatment Hazardous drug – wear gloves when dispensing and wash hands before and after contact (see the Compounding chapters) Folic acid supplementation is recommended to prevent macrocytosis Clinical response can take 3-6 months

HYDROXYUREA DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Additive risk of myelosuppression if used in combination with other immunosuppressants (e.g., topical or systemic tacrolimus, clozapine, deferiprone, leflunomide, natalizumab, tofacitinib).

OTHER DRUGS

DRUG	DOSE	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
L-glutamine: an amino acid thought to decrease oxidative stress, which can damage sickled RBCs. Reduces acute complications of SCD.		
L-glutamine *(Endari)* Oral powder (5 grams per packet)	TBW < 30 kg: 5 grams twice daily TBW 30-65 kg: 10 grams twice daily TBW > 65 kg: 15 grams twice daily	**SIDE EFFECTS** Constipation, flatulence, nausea, headache, pain (abdominal, extremities, back, chest), cough **NOTES** Mix each dose in 8 oz. of a cold or room temperature beverage (e.g., water, milk, apple juice), or 4-6 oz. of food (e.g., applesauce, yogurt); drug does not need to completely dissolve before administration
Crizanlizumab: a monoclonal antibody that binds and inhibits P-selectin, which is involved in adhesion of sickled RBCs to vessels. Reduces frequency of VOC.		
Crizanlizumab *(Adakveo)* Injection	5 mg/kg IV every 2 weeks x 2 doses, then 5 mg/kg every 4 weeks	**WARNINGS** Infusion-related reactions, lab test interference with platelet counts **SIDE EFFECTS** Nausea, arthralgias, fever

KEY COUNSELING POINTS

See the Drug Formulations and Patient Counseling chapter for counseling language/layman's terminology.

HYDROXYUREA

- Wear disposable gloves while handling the medication to reduce exposure. Wash hands before and after handling. The capsules should not be opened.
- Can cause infections.
- Avoid in pregnancy (teratogenic). Effective contraception required for sexually active males and females of reproductive potential, both during and after treatment.
- Avoid live vaccines. Check with your provider before getting any vaccines.

Select Guidelines/References

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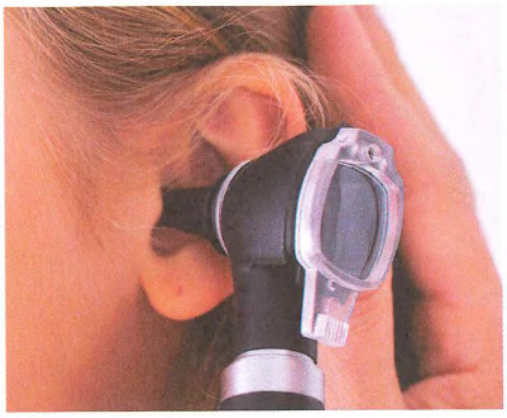
EYES, EARS, NOSE & SKIN CONDITIONS



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ALLERGIC RHINITIS, COUGH & COLD

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ALLERGIC RHINITIS

BACKGROUND

Allergic rhinitis, commonly called hay fever or simply "allergies," causes cold-like symptoms [congestion, rhinorrhea (runny nose), sneezing, sinus pressure and itchy eyes]. Colds are caused by a virus; allergic rhinitis is caused by exposure to an allergen (e.g., pollen, dust, pet dander). Refer to the figure below that contrasts colds and allergic rhinitis. Allergic rhinitis is suspected when a person has a few quick sneezes in succession (due to an exposure to an allergen) with watery, itchy red eyes and an itchy nose and throat.

Allergic rhinitis symptoms can be intermittent (e.g., exposure to animal dander when visiting a friend's home) or chronic (e.g., symptoms that last for months when the pollen count is elevated).

Allergic rhinitis can cause discomfort, missed days at school and work and lost productivity. Untreated symptoms can lead to chronic sinusitis, otitis media (in children) and asthma exacerbations. Many patients with asthma have allergic rhinitis; both are inflammatory reactions to a trigger.

COLDS VS. ALLERGIES

The symptoms of the common cold and allergies are very similar, which can make it difficult to tell the difference between the two.

COLD	ALLERGY
Sneezing	Sneezing
Runny nose	Runny nose
Thick, dark mucus	Thin, clear mucus
Sore throat	Wheezing
Body aches	Red, watery eyes
Symptoms take about three days to appear and usually last for about a week	Symptoms can last for days or months after contact with allergens

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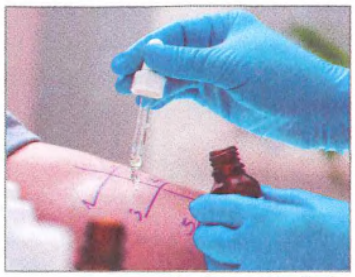
NON-DRUG TREATMENT

Avoiding exposure to known or suspected allergens, if possible, will reduce symptoms. An IgE-mediated skin prick test (see picture) or blood test can determine allergens the patient reacts to.



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Common allergens include:

- Pollens from trees, grasses and weeds
- Molds, both indoor and outdoor
- Dust mites that live in bedding, carpeting and other items that hold moisture
- Animal dander from furred animals such as cats, dogs, horses and rabbits

Vacuuming carpets, drapes and upholstery with a HEPA vacuum cleaner often (at least weekly) reduces allergens. Dust mites can be reduced by removing carpets and upholstered furniture, encasing pillows, mattresses and box springs in allergen-impermeable covers and washing bedding and soft toys in hot water weekly. Ventilation systems with high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters reduce some allergens (pollen, mold), but these systems can be expensive and are not effective for everyone.

When air pollutants are triggers, outdoor activities may need to be limited when air is unhealthy. The air quality index (AQI) rates the local air as good to hazardous. The AQI is useful for other conditions in which the air quality can affect breathing, including asthma, other types of lung disease and heart disease. Similarly, pollen counts can be monitored and patients can stay indoors when the pollen count is high.

NASAL IRRIGATION AND WETTING AGENTS

Nasal irrigations and wetting agents provide symptom relief by reducing nasal stuffiness, runny nose and sneezing. Nasal gels with petrolatum *(Allergen Block)* can be applied around the nostrils to physically block pollens and allergens from entering the nose. These products are considered safe for most populations, including children and pregnant women.

Wetting agents are commercially available (e.g., *Ocean, Little Remedies*, *Simply Saline)* and contain saline, propylene or polyethylene glycol, which provide moisture and reduce irritation to the nasal passages. Nasal irrigation (e.g., *NeilMed Sinus Rinse)* uses an isotonic (0.9%) or hypertonic (2 – 3.5%) saline solution to rinse out allergens and mucus, improve ciliary function and reduce swelling. Premixed saline packets are commercially available or a salt solution can be prepared at home. A homemade or store-bought saline mixture must be combined with distilled, sterile or previously boiled and cooled water. Tap water (known as drinking, or potable water) should not be used; it contains organisms that are safe to ingest orally (killed by stomach acid) but can cause infections when used for nasal irrigation.

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Nasal irrigations can be administered using a syringe or neti pot. A neti pot is a popular product that looks like a small teapot (see picture above). The prepared saline solution is placed in the neti pot, then poured into one nostril and drained out of the other nostril while breathing through the mouth. The most common side effects are mild nasal stinging or burning which are increased at higher concentrations of saline. After each use, the neti pot should be rinsed out with distilled, sterile or previously boiled water and allowed to air dry. Pots should never be shared with others.

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DRUG TREATMENT

Selecting appropriate treatment depends on the severity of illness and symptoms. Intranasal steroids are first line for chronic, moderate-to-severe symptoms. Milder, intermittent symptoms can be treated with oral antihistamines. Decongestants can be used if congestion is present. Antihistamines and decongestants are available in oral and nasal formulations. Ophthalmic medications for red, itchy eyes (e.g., allergic conjunctivitis) can be found in the Common Conditions of the Eyes & Ears chapter.

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INTRANASAL STEROIDS

Intranasal steroids work by decreasing inflammation. They are considered first-line treatment for moderate-severe symptoms. They are especially effective in reducing the nasal symptoms of allergic rhinitis (e.g., sneezing, itching, rhinorrhea, congestion). Several intranasal steroids come OTC for use. Note that the same steroids used to treat allergic rhinitis and asthma have different brand names and delivery systems. For example, fluticasone for allergic rhinitis comes in a nasal inhaler as *Flonase* ("-nase" for nasal), and for asthma it comes in an oral inhaler as *Flovent*.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Budesonide ***(Rhinocort Allergy*)*** OTC	Adult: 1 spray per nostril daily (max 4 sprays per nostril daily) Age ≥ 6 yrs: 1 spray per nostril daily (max 2 sprays per nostril daily)	**WARNINGS** Avoid use if recent nasal septal ulcers, nasal surgery, or recent nasal trauma due to delayed wound healing High doses for prolonged periods can cause adrenal suppression, ↓ growth (children), immunosuppression Use caution with cataracts and/or glaucoma; ↑ intraocular pressure (IOP), open-angle glaucoma and cataracts have occurred with prolonged use **SIDE EFFECTS** Epistaxis (nose bleeds), headache, dry nose, unpleasant taste, localized infection **MONITORING** Growth (pediatrics), vision changes, eye exams in long-term use, signs/symptoms of oral thrush and/or adrenal suppression If using regularly for several months, recommend periodic nasal exams to evaluate for nasal septal perforation or ulcers **NOTES** Can take up to one week to get full relief Budesonide and beclomethasone are the preferred nasal steroids in pregnancy Shake bottle well before each use Discard device after total number of labeled doses, even if the bottle does not feel completely empty
Fluticasone ***(Flonase Allergy Relief, Flonase Sensimist, Children's Flonase,*** *Xhance)* Rx and OTC + azelastine *(Dymista)*	Age ≥ 12 yrs: 1-2 sprays per nostril daily Age 2-11 yrs: 1 spray per nostril daily	
Triamcinolone ***(Nasacort Allergy 24HR,*** *Nasacort Allergy 24HR Children*)* OTC	Age ≥ 6 yrs: 1-2 sprays per nostril daily Age 2-5 yrs: 1 spray per nostril daily	
Beclomethasone *(Beconase AQ*, Qnasl, Qnasl Children's)*	Adult: 1-2 sprays per nostril BID *(Beconase AQ)*; 2 sprays per nostril daily *(Qnasl)*	
Ciclesonide *(Omnaris, Zetonna*)*	Adult: 2 sprays per nostril daily *(Omnaris)*; 1 spray per nostril daily *(Zetonna)*	
Flunisolide	Adult: 2 sprays per nostril BID or TID	
Mometasone *(Nasonex 24HR Allergy)* Rx and OTC Nasal implant: *Sinuva* + olopatadine *(Ryaltris)*	Adult: 2 sprays per nostril daily	

**Brand discontinued but name still used in practice.*

ANTIHISTAMINES

Oral antihistamines are commonly used for mild-moderate symptoms. They reduce itching, sneezing and rhinorrhea, but have little effect on nasal congestion. Antihistamines block histamine at the histamine-1 (H1) receptor. First-generation antihistamines (e.g., hydroxyzine, meclizine) cause more sedation than second-generation antihistamines. The second-generation drugs are generally preferred since they cause less sedation and cognitive impairment. Promethazine is a first-generation antihistamine that can be seen in cough and cold combination products (see later in chapter). Antihistamines can help if symptoms of allergic conjunctivitis (e.g., itchy, red eyes) are present (see the Common Conditions of the Eyes & Ears chapter).

DIPHENHYDRAMINE IN PHARMACY; IT'S EVERYWHERE

Diphenhydramine is a first-generation antihistamine, but it is used for many indications, such as:

- Treatment of acute allergic reactions (+/- epinephrine, depending on severity)
- Prevention of allergic reactions (included in most premedication regimens for high-risk drugs)
- Allergic rhinitis
- Cough (has antitussive properties)
- Sleep (sedating)
- Dystonic reactions (anticholinergic properties)
- Motion sickness

Due to its wide range of effects, it can worsen some disease states (e.g., BPH, constipation, dementia, glaucoma)

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DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Select First-Generation Oral Antihistamines		
Diphenhydramine *(**Benadryl,** many others)* Capsule, tablet, chewable, elixir, strip, syrup, injection, cream, gel, solution, spray Rx and OTC	Adult: 25 mg PO Q4-6H or 50 mg PO Q6-8H (max 300 mg/day) Age 6-11 yrs: 12.5-25 mg PO Q4-6H (max 150 mg/day) Age < 6 yrs: do not use OTC unless directed by a healthcare provider	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Neonates or premature infants, breastfeeding **WARNINGS** Avoid in the elderly (due to strong anticholinergic effects; Beers criteria) and in children < 2 years Can cause CNS depression/sedation Use with caution in patients with cardiovascular disease, prostate enlargement, glaucoma, asthma, pyloroduodenal obstruction and thyroid disease Do not use with MAO inhibitors (especially clemastine, carbinoxamine) Age restrictions vary for OTC use, check product labeling (e.g., do not use diphenhydramine in children < 6 yrs or doxylamine in children < 12 yrs) **SIDE EFFECTS** Somnolence, cognitive impairment, strong anticholinergic effects (dry mouth, blurred vision, urinary retention, constipation) and seizures/ arrhythmias at higher doses **NOTES** First-generation antihistamines should not be taken by lactating women; second-generation antihistamines preferred Discontinue ≥ 72 hours prior to allergy skin testing Can cause photosensitivity; use sunscreens and wear protective clothing while taking FDA Safety Alert: reports of abuse/misuse of diphenhydramine by teenagers leading to serious heart problems, seizures, coma or death
Chlorpheniramine *(Aller-Chlor,* others) Tablet, syrup OTC	IR (adult): 4 mg PO Q4-6H (max 24 mg/day) ER (adult): 12 mg PO Q12H (max 24 mg/day)	
Doxylamine *Unisom SleepTabs* - for sleep Tablet OTC	Adult: 12.5-25 mg PO Q4-6H (max 75 mg/day)	
Clemastine Tablet, syrup	Adult: 1.34-2.68 mg PO Q8-12H (max 8.04 mg/day)	
Carbinoxamine *(Karbinal ER, RyVent)* Tablet, liquid	IR (adult): 4-8 mg PO Q6-8H ER (adult): 6-16 mg PO Q12H	

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Second-Generation Oral Antihistamines		
Cetirizine *(Zyrtec Allergy, Zyrtec Children's Allergy,* others) Capsule, tablet, solution, syrup, chewable, ODT, injection Rx and OTC **+ pseudoephedrine *(Zyrtec-D)*** OTC	Age ≥ 6 yrs: 5-10 mg PO daily (max 5 mg daily in elderly) Age 2-5 yrs: 2.5-5 mg PO daily	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Levocetirizine: end-stage renal disease (CrCl < 10 mL/min), hemodialysis, infants and children age 6 months to 11 years with renal impairment **WARNINGS** Can cause CNS depression/sedation, especially when used with other sedating drugs Use with caution in the elderly and in renal or hepatic impairment **SIDE EFFECTS** Somnolence can still be seen (more with cetirizine and levocetirizine), headache **NOTES** Fexofenadine: take with water (not fruit juice due to ↓ absorption); avoid administration with aluminum or magnesium-containing products Discontinue ≥ 72 hours prior to allergy skin testing In pregnancy, loratadine or cetirizine are preferred Cetirizine and levocetirizine have a fast onset and may work best for some patients More sedating: cetirizine and levocetirizine Less sedating: fexofenadine and loratadine Rebound pruritus has occurred after discontinuation of cetirizine Some formulations of fexofenadine, loratadine and desloratadine contain phenylalanine (avoid if PKU)
Levocetirizine *(Xyzal Allergy 24HR, Xyzal Allergy 24HR Children's)* Tablet, solution Rx and OTC	Age ≥ 12 yrs: 5 mg QHS Age 6-11 yrs: 2.5 mg QHS Age 6 mos-5 yrs: 1.25 mg QHS	
Fexofenadine *(Allegra Allergy, Allegra Allergy Children's)* Tablet, suspension, ODT OTC **+ pseudoephedrine *(Allegra-D)*** OTC	Age ≥ 12 yrs: 60 mg BID or 180 mg daily Age 2-11 yrs: 30 mg BID	
Loratadine *(Claritin, Claritin Children's,* *Alavert)* Tablet, capsule, chewable, solution, syrup, ODT OTC **+ pseudoephedrine *(Claritin-D)*** OTC	Age ≥ 6 yrs: 10 mg daily or 5 mg BID *(RediTabs)* Age 2-5 yrs: 5 mg daily	
Desloratadine *(Clarinex)* Tablet, ODT + pseudoephedrine *(Clarinex-D 12 Hour)*	Adult: 5 mg daily	
Intranasal Antihistamines		
Azelastine *(Astepro Allergy)* OTC and Rx + fluticasone *(Dymista)*	Adult: 1-2 sprays per nostril BID	**SIDE EFFECTS** Bitter taste, headache, somnolence, nasal irritation, epistaxis, sinus pain **NOTES** Helps with nasal congestion; can be combined with an intranasal steroid (increases cost and risk for side effects)
Olopatadine *(Patanase*)*	Adult: 2 sprays per nostril BID	

**Brand discontinued but name still used in practice.*

DECONGESTANTS

Decongestants are alpha-adrenergic agonists (sympathomimetics). They cause vasoconstriction, which decreases sinus vessel engorgement and mucosal edema and makes them effective at reducing sinus and nasal congestion. If a product contains a D after the name (such as *Mucinex D)*, it usually contains a decongestant such as phenylephrine or pseudoephedrine (see Study Tip Gal on combination products later in chapter). Phenylephrine has poor oral absorption. It comes as a nasal spray, but lasts for a shorter time and causes more side effects than oxymetazoline spray. Pseudoephedrine is an effective systemic decongestant; it is a precursor to methamphetamine, and has restricted distribution (see box to the right).

COMBAT METHAMPHETAMINE EPIDEMIC ACT 2005

To combat the methamphetamine epidemic, there are restricted sales of non-prescription products containing pseudoephedrine, phenylpropanolamine and ephedrine, since these can be converted to methamphetamine.

Products must be kept behind the counter or in a locked cabinet, usually located in the pharmacy.

A logbook of any sale more than a single-dose package (maximum of 60 mg) is kept. For any sale above this amount, the customer must show a government-issued photo ID (e.g., driver's license, passport).

Customers record their name, date and time of sale and signature in the logbook. Staff must verify that the name matches the photo ID, the date and time are correct, record the customer address and what the person received, including the quantity purchased.

Under federal law the maximum amount allowed for purchase is 3.6 grams per day, and 9 grams in a 30-day period.

The logbook must be kept for a minimum of 2 years and be readily available upon request by board inspectors or law enforcement. It cannot be shared with the public.

Many states have their own laws in addition to the federal restrictions (e.g., age restrictions, prescription required or stricter quantity limits).

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Systemic (Oral)		
Phenylephrine ***(Sudafed PE,*** others) Tablet, liquid, solution OTC Injection: used as a vasopressor (see Acute & Critical Care Medicine chapter)	Adult: 10 mg Q4H PRN (max 60 mg/day) Age 6-11 yrs: 5 mg Q4H PRN (max 30 mg/day) Age 4-5 yrs: 2.5 mg Q4H PRN (max 15 mg/day)	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Do not use within 14 days of MAO inhibitors **WARNINGS** Avoid age < 2 years (FDA), < 4 years (package labeling) Use with caution in patients with CV disease and uncontrolled hypertension (can ↑ BP), hyperthyroidism (can worsen), diabetes (can ↑ BG), bowel obstruction, glaucoma (can ↑ IOP), BPH (can cause urinary retention), renal impairment, seizure disorder, the elderly **SIDE EFFECTS** CV stimulation (↑ HR, palpitations, ↑ BP), CNS stimulation (anxiety, tremors, insomnia, nervousness, restlessness, fear, hallucinations), ↓ appetite, dizziness, headache **NOTES** Avoid oral decongestants in first trimester of pregnancy Phenylephrine has low bioavailability (≤ 38%); pseudoephedrine is more effective Onset of 15-60 minutes
Pseudoephedrine ***(Sudafed, Nexafed, Zephrex-D,*** others) Tablet, liquid, syrup Rx and non-prescription behind the counter (see box above)	Adult: 60 mg Q4-6H PRN, or 120 mg ER Q12H, or 240 mg ER daily (max 240 mg/day) Age 6-11 yrs: 30 mg Q4-6H PRN (max 120 mg/day) Age 4-5 yrs: 15 mg Q4-6H PRN (max 60 mg/day)	

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Topicals (Intranasal)		
Oxymetazoline 0.05% *(**Afrin,** Vicks Sinex 12 Hour, Zicam Extreme Congestion Relief)* OTC	Age ≥ 6 yrs: 2-3 sprays per nostril Q12H PRN	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Oxymetazoline: do not use for more than 3 days **WARNINGS** Do not use with MAO inhibitors Use with caution with CV disease and uncontrolled hypertension, thyroid disease, diabetes, BPH **SIDE EFFECTS** Rhinitis medicamentosa (rebound congestion if used longer than 3 days), nasal stinging, burning and dryness (vehicle-related), sneezing, trauma from tip of the device **NOTES** Fast onset (5-10 minutes)
Phenylephrine 0.25%, 0.5%, 1% *(Little Remedies Decongestant Drops, Neo-Synephrine,* others) OTC	Adult: 2-3 sprays of 0.25% to 1% per nostril Q4H PRN	

ADDITIONAL ALLERGY MEDICATIONS

Intranasal Cromolyn

Intranasal cromolyn *(NasalCrom)* is an OTC mast cell stabilizer used for treatment and prophylaxis of allergic rhinitis. It must be started at the onset of allergy season and used regularly (not PRN) to be effective. Symptoms will start to improve in 3 – 7 days, but maximal effect can take ≥ 2 – 4 weeks of continued use. Intranasal cromolyn is not as effective as other drugs but it is safe to use in children age ≥ 2 years and in pregnancy.

Oral Leukotriene Receptor Antagonist

Montelukast *(Singulair)* is a leukotriene modifying agent indicated for treatment of both allergic rhinitis and asthma. It is commonly used in children. The FDA issued a boxed warning for montelukast, resulting from the risk of serious neuropsychiatric side effects. For allergic rhinitis, montelukast should be reserved for those who are unable to be treated effectively with other medications. See the Asthma chapter.

Intranasal Ipratropium

This drug is effective for decreasing rhinorrhea by causing nasal dryness (it is not effective for other nasal symptoms).

Immunotherapy

Immunotherapy is a preventative treatment for allergies, either through subcutaneous (SC) injections or sublingual (SL) treatments. They work by slowly increasing exposure to the allergen, making the immune system less sensitive to the substance. Long-term immunotherapy can improve the underlying allergic disease and relieve symptoms even after stopping treatment. It is recommended to treat for a minimum of three years.

SC allergy shots are the traditional method of treatment, which must be given in a medical office. An alternative option is SL treatment. The SL treatments for allergic rhinitis are tailored to specific allergens. The first dose must be given in a medical office where the patient can be monitored for at least 30 minutes afterward for signs of an allergic reaction (boxed warning). If tolerated, subsequent doses can be taken at home. The patient should have an epinephrine auto-injector while on SL immunotherapy.

- *Oralair* contains five different grass pollen extracts.
- *Grastek* contains Timothy grass pollen extract.
- *Ragwitek* contains ragweed pollen extract.
- *Odactra* contains house dust mite allergen extract.

COUGH AND COLD

BACKGROUND

The common cold, a viral infection of the upper respiratory tract, is caused by over 200 viruses, including rhinoviruses and coronaviruses. It is transmitted by mucus secretions or by air (from coughing or sneezing). Coughing or sneezing into the elbow or a tissue is preferable over coughing into a hand, which can then touch surfaces and spread illness. Transmission is best prevented by frequent hand washing with soap or soap substitutes (e.g., hand sanitizer). Refer to the Medication Safety & Quality Improvement chapter for correct hand washing technique, and to the Infectious Diseases II chapter for a table of common upper and lower respiratory infections. Colds are usually self-limiting, but are a leading cause of absenteeism in work and school due to bothersome symptoms.

DRUG TREATMENT

Treatment of cough and cold is based on the presenting symptoms; each patient will present differently and require different treatment. The goal of treatment is to reduce duration and frequency of symptoms to allow the patient to feel better and return to normal activities.

NATURAL PRODUCTS USED FOR COLDS

Zinc, in various formulations including lozenges, is used for cold prevention and treatment. Zinc lozenges or syrup might decrease cold duration if used correctly and at first signs of symptoms (taken every two hours while awake, starting 24 – 48 hours of symptom onset). For this purpose zinc supplements are rated as "possibly effective" by the *Natural Medicines Database*. Zinc lozenges can cause mouth irritation, a metallic taste and nausea. They should not be used for more than five to seven days, as long-term use can cause copper deficiency. Zinc nasal formulations were removed from the market due to causing loss of smell.

Vitamin C (ascorbic acid) supplements are commonly used, but they have little to no efficacy for cold prevention. Some data has shown a decrease in the duration of the cold by 1 – 1.5 days at doses of 1 – 3 grams/day. There might also be a dose-dependent response; doses of at least 2 grams/day appear to work better than 1 g/day. Vitamin C is rated as "possibly effective" for cold treatment by the *Natural Medicines Database*. High doses of vitamin C (4 g/day or greater) can cause diarrhea and possibly kidney stones. Echinacea is rated as "possibly effective" for cold treatment.

With any of these products, it is important to use the correct dose from a reputable manufacturer. *Airborne* and *Emergen-C Immune+* are popular products that contain a variety of ingredients, including vitamin C, vitamin E, zinc and echinacea.

EXPECTORANTS

Cough associated with colds is usually nonproductive (i.e., a dry cough). If productive cough is present, expectorants can be used to thin mucus and move secretions up and out of the respiratory tract.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Guaifenesin *(Mucinex, Robitussin Mucus + Chest Congestion,* Robafen*) Tablet, liquid, syrup, packet **+ dextromethorphan *(Robafen DM,* Robitussin DM*)** OTC	Adult: 200-400 mg Q4H PRN, or 600-1,200 mg ER Q12H (max 2.4 g/day) Age 6-11 yrs: 1,200 mg/day (max) Age 4-5 yrs: 600 mg/day (max)	**SIDE EFFECTS** Nausea (dose-related), vomiting, dizziness, headache, rash, diarrhea, stomach pain **NOTES** OTC: do not use ER tablets in children age < 12 yrs Some formulations contain phenylalanine (avoid with PKU)

**Brand discontinued but name still used in practice.*

COUGH SUPPRESSANTS

Cough suppressants are used for dry, nonproductive cough or to suppress productive cough at night to allow for restful sleep. Dextromethorphan and opioids, such as codeine and hydrocodone, have a high affinity for several regions of the brain, including the medullary cough center, suppressing the cough reflex. Benzonatate suppresses cough by a topical anesthetic action on the respiratory stretch receptors.

Opioids and dextromethorphan have abuse potential (see the Pain chapter for opioid boxed warnings). Dextromethorphan acts as a serotonin reuptake inhibitor. At usual antitussive doses, it does not have addictive properties, but at high doses it acts as an NMDA-receptor blocker leading to euphoria and hallucinations similar to the illicit substance PCP. Due to its abuse potential, many states ban the sale of dextromethorphan to minors age < 18 years. Codeine products containing one or more non-codeine active ingredient (e.g., guaifenesin) and no more than 200 mg of codeine/100 mL are scheduled as C-V drugs. Codeine is a known drug of abuse, particularly in combination with promethazine.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Dextromethorphan ***(Delsym, Robafen Cough,*** *Robitussin Cough*)* Capsule, liquid, lozenge, suspension, strips OTC **+ guaifenesin** ***(Robafen DM,*** *Robitussin DM*)* OTC	Adult: 10-20 mg Q4H PRN, or 30 mg Q6-8H PRN, or 60 mg ER Q12H PRN (max 120 mg/day) Age 6-12 yrs: max 60 mg/day Age 4-6 yrs: max 30 mg/day	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Do not use within 14 days of an MAO inhibitor **WARNINGS** Serotonin syndrome (if co-administered with other serotonergic drugs), use with caution in patients who are CYP450 2D6 poor metabolizers or with CYP2D6 inhibitors, debilitated (e.g., sedated, confined to a supine position) **SIDE EFFECTS** N/V, drowsiness, CNS depression (especially when used with other sedating drugs) **NOTES** If the product name has DM at the end, such as *Robitussin DM,* it contains dextromethorphan OTC: do not use in children age < 4 years
Codeine C-II (single entity used for pain) C-V (combination products used for cough and cold: see table on next page)	Adult: 7.5-120 mg PO as single dose or divided doses	**BOXED WARNING** Respiratory depression and death have occurred in children who received codeine following tonsillectomy and/or adenoidectomy and had evidence of being ultra-rapid metabolizers of codeine due to a CYP450 2D6 polymorphism; deaths have occurred in nursing infants after being exposed to high concentrations of morphine from mothers who were ultra-rapid metabolizers **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Do not use in children age < 12 years (any indication) or in children age < 18 years after tonsillectomy and/or adenoidectomy **NOTES** The FDA recommends to avoid codeine-containing cough and cold products for patients age < 18 years (see the Pain and Pediatric Conditions chapters)
Benzonatate ***(Tessalon Perles)***	Adult: 100-200 mg PO TID PRN (max 600 mg/day)	**WARNINGS** Do not use in children age < 10 years; accidental ingestion and fatal overdose has been reported **SIDE EFFECTS** Somnolence, confusion, hallucinations
Diphenhydramine ***(Benadryl)*** Rx and OTC	Adult: 25 mg PO Q4H PRN (max 150 mg/day)	See First-Generation Oral Antihistamines table

**Brand discontinued but name still used in practice.*

DECONGESTANTS

Systemic and nasal decongestants, discussed previously, are used to relieve congestion and rhinorrhea.

ANALGESICS/ANTIPYRETICS

Analgesics and antipyretics such as acetaminophen and ibuprofen are used to relieve sore throat, body malaise and fever. They are often added to combination products for cough/cold. Use caution not to exceed the maximum daily dosing for acetaminophen or ibuprofen if multiple medications are being used. See the Pain chapter for more information.

SELECT COUGH AND COLD COMBINATION PRODUCTS

See the Study Tip Gal on the next page for methods to help recognize the ingredients in combination products.

DRUG	ADULT DOSING
Dextromethorphan/promethazine	15 mg/6.25 mg per 5 mL; 5 mL PO Q4-6H PRN (max 30 mL/day)
Brompheniramine/pseudoephedrine/dextromethorphan ***(Bromfed DM)*** Rx and OTC	2 mg/30 mg/10 mg per 5 mL; 10 mL PO Q4H PRN (max 60 mL/day)
Promethazine/codeine C-V	6.25 mg/10 mg per 5 mL; 5 mL PO Q4-6H PRN (max 30 mL/day)
Promethazine/phenylephrine/codeine *(Promethazine VC with Codeine*)* C-V	6.25 mg/5 mg/10 mg per 5 mL; 5 mL PO Q4-6H PRN (max 30 mL/day)
Guaifenesin/codeine *(G Tussin AC)* C-V	100 mg/10 mg per 5 mL; 10 mL PO Q4H PRN (max 60 mL/day)
Guaifenesin/codeine/pseudoephedrine *(Coditussin DAC, Virtussin DAC)* C-V	100 mg/10 mg/30 mg per 5 mL; 10 mL PO Q4H PRN (max 40 mL/day)
Chlorpheniramine/hydrocodone ***(TussiCaps*)*** C-II	Capsule: 8 mg/10 mg per capsule; 1 capsule PO Q12H PRN (max 2 caps/day) Suspension: 8 mg/10 mg ER per 5 mL; 5 mL PO Q12H PRN (max 10 mL/day)
Chlorpheniramine/codeine *(Tuzistra XR*)* C-III	4 mg/20 mg ER per 5 mL; 10 mL PO Q12H PRN (max 20 mL/day)

**Brand discontinued but name still used in practice.*

COUGH AND COLD COMBINATION PRODUCTS: WHAT'S IN A NAME?

The name of a combination cough/cold product can tell you what it contains. This is based on either the symptom it treats or the abbreviation included in the name. Some commonly used abbreviations are:

D = **d**econgestant (e.g., phenylephrine, pseudoephedrine); example: *Mucinex D* = guaifenesin + pseudoephedrine

PE = **p**henylephrine; example: *Sudafed PE* = phenylephrine

DM = **d**extro**m**ethorphan; example: *Robafen DM* = guaifenesin + dextromethorphan

AC = contains codeine; example: *G Tussin AC* = guaifenesin + codeine

Guaifenesin is a mucolytic (thins out mucus); example: *Mucinex*

Analgesic in combination cough and cold products is usually acetaminophen

Antihistamines (e.g., diphenhydramine, chlorpheniramine, brompheniramine) are common and cause sedation; the night-time products, and some anytime products, contain an antihistamine

COUGH AND COLD PRODUCTS IN CHILDREN

If a young child has a cold, proper hydration, nasal bulbs for suctioning, saline drops/sprays *(Ocean* and generics) and vaporizers/humidifiers are useful. Ibuprofen and acetaminophen can be used for fever or pain (see the Pain and Pediatric Conditions chapters).

PEDIATRIC COUGH AND COLD TREATMENT – CAUTION NEEDED

Children < 18 years
- Avoid codeine and hydrocodone-containing products (FDA)

Children < 4 years
- Avoid OTC products (package labeling)

Children < 2 years
- Avoid OTC products and promethazine (FDA)
- Avoid topical menthol and camphor (package labeling)

Cough and cold products generally do not offer much symptom relief to young children, but have potentially serious side effects. Many products contain multiple ingredients, which increases the risk of accidental overdose if used with other medications. Symptoms due to cough and cold are self-limiting and drug treatment is often not necessary. The FDA does not recommend OTC drug treatment for cough and cold symptoms in children age < 2 years, but most manufacturers include product labeling to avoid in children age < 4 years. Some combination products have additional labeling restrictions for use only in children age ≥ 6 years.

Do not use promethazine in children age < 2 years because of the risk of fatal respiratory depression. Due to the risk of slowed breathing and overdose, do not use drugs containing codeine or hydrocodone in patients age < 18 years. If used to treat pain, codeine and hydrocodone do not have the same restrictions (see the Pain and Pediatric Conditions chapters).

Topical menthol can be applied to the chest and neck (never to the nose) to open the airways and suppress cough; do not use this in children age < 2 years as camphor and menthol can cause CNS toxicity if ingested. *Vicks BabyRub* contains petrolatum, oils and aloe; it is considered safe, but lacks efficacy data.

KEY COUNSELING POINTS

See the Drug Formulations and Patient Counseling chapter for nasal spray administration instructions.

ANTIHISTAMINES

- Some formulations contain phenylalanine. Do not use if you have phenylketonuria (PKU).

Select Guidelines/References

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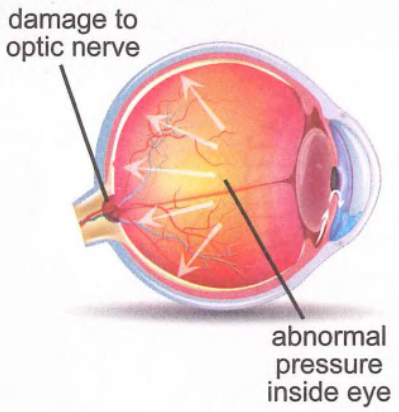

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CHAPTER 38

COMMON CONDITIONS OF THE EYES & EARS

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= Study Tip Gal = Key Drugs Guy

BACKGROUND

Many eye and ear conditions can be treated with topical medications applied to the eye or ear. By applying the medication directly to the specific location, instead of systemically, adverse effects are minimized.

The various formulations of topical eye and ear medications are shown in the box below. The eyes are more sensitive than the ears. Eye drops can be used in the ear, but never use ear drops in the eyes. The ear drops may not have an appropriate pH, may not be isotonic and may not be sterile. Correct administration technique is key for each medication to work.

EYE & EAR PRESCRIPTION INTERPRETATION

ABBREV.	MEANING	CAUTION
AD AS AU	Right Ear Left Ear Each Ear	These abbreviations can be mistaken for each other and can mean other things; know how to interpret them, but it is safer to write them out (e.g., use right eye instead of OD)
OD OS OU	Right Eye Left Eye Each Eye	

Tip: A is from the Latin word for ear (auris), O is for eye (oculus), D is for right (dextra) and S is for left (sinistra)

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EYE AND EAR FORMULATIONS

- Solutions: 1 drop = 0.05 mL.
- Suspensions: shake well.
- Ointments: apply to conjunctival sac or over lid margins (blepharitis). Can cause blurry vision. Do not use with contact lenses.
- Gels: with cap on, invert and shake once to get the medication into the tip before instilling into the eye.

GLAUCOMA

Glaucoma is a disease of the eye that results in damage to the optic nerve and loss of the visual field (i.e., vision straight ahead and peripheral vision, measured by the visual field test). In most cases, the intraocular pressure (IOP) is above the normal range of 12 – 22 mmHg. IOP can be increased from genetics, age and medications (see Key Drugs Guy). The goal of treatment is to reduce IOP.

There are two main forms of glaucoma. Open-angle glaucoma is the most common type. It often presents without symptoms and is treated with eye drops or surgery. Angle-closure, or closed-angle glaucoma, is a sharp, sudden increase in IOP due to a blockage. This type of glaucoma usually presents with eye pain, headaches and decreased vision and is a medical emergency that is treated surgically.

DRUGS THAT CAN INCREASE IOP

Anticholinergics (e.g., antihistamines, oxybutynin, tolterodine, benztropine, scopolamine, trihexyphenidyl, tricyclic antidepressants)

Decongestants (e.g., pseudoephedrine)

Chronic steroids, especially eye drops

Topiramate

DRUG TREATMENT

Glaucoma treatments decrease IOP by targeting the aqueous humor (fluid in the eye) in two main ways (see Study Tip Gal). Prostaglandin (PG) analogs are used commonly as initial treatment. PG analogs are the most effective drugs at decreasing IOP (~30%); they are safe and are used once daily. Ophthalmic beta-blockers (e.g., timolol) decrease IOP by ~22%.

A beta-blocker is preferred if the IOP is high in one eye only because the darkening of the iris and eyelash thickening seen with PG analogs is not desirable in only one eye (see drug table below). If monotherapy does not sufficiently decrease IOP, consider switching the medication or using combination therapy.

Adequate treatment requires good eye drop technique and a high level of adherence. The correct way to administer eye drops is described in the Drug Formulations and Patient Counseling chapter. Because glaucoma often presents with no symptoms, counseling on the importance of adherence is critical.

GLAUCOMA TREATMENT GOAL: DECREASE IOP

Strategies:

- ↓ aqueous humor production (make less fluid)
  - Beta-blocker (e.g., timolol)
  - Carbonic anhydrase inhibitor (e.g., dorzolamide)
- ↑ aqueous humor outflow (move fluid out)
  - Prostaglandin analog (e.g., latanoprost)
- Or both, often achieved with add-on treatment
  - Alpha-2 agonist (e.g., brimonidine)

DRUG	DOSING	SIDE EFFECTS/CLINICAL CONCERNS
Prostaglandin Analogs: increase aqueous humor outflow		
Bimatoprost *(Lumigan)* **Latanoprost *(Xalatan, Xelpros,* *Iyuzeh)*** + netarsudil *(Rocklatan)* **Travoprost *(Travatan Z)*** Latanoprostene bunod *(Vyzulta)* Tafluprost *(Zioptan)* **Bimatoprost *(Latisse)*** is indicated for eyelash hypotrichosis (inadequate growth of eyelashes) to ↑ eyelash growth; do not use with prostaglandin analogs indicated for glaucoma	1 drop QHS Do not exceed once daily dosing; can ↓ efficacy Select products contain the preservative benzalkonium chloride (BAK); remove contact lenses before use	**WARNINGS** Ocular effects: darkening of the iris, eyelid skin and eyelashes; eyelash length and number can increase; contamination of multiple-dose ophthalmic solutions can cause bacterial keratitis **SIDE EFFECTS** Blurred vision, stinging, ↑ pigmentation of iris/eyelashes, eyelash growth/thickening, foreign body sensation **NOTES** *Travatan Z* and *Xelpros* do not contain BAK (a different preservative is used); can be used in patients with a past reaction to BAK or dry eyes *Zioptan* comes as 10 single-use, preservative-free containers; discard each container after use Latanoprost, latanoprostene bunod and tafluprost should be stored in the refrigerator before opening; once opened, store at room temperature Naming tip: –prost = prostaglandin analog
Beta-Blockers: reduce aqueous humor production		
Timolol 0.25% and 0.5% *(Timoptic, Timoptic-XE, Istalol,* *Timolol GFS, Betimol, Timoptic Ocudose)* **+ dorzolamide *(Cosopt, Cosopt PF)*** + brimonidine *(Combigan)* Betaxolol *(Betoptic S)* Carteolol Levobunolol *(Betagan)*	*Timolol:* 1 drop daily or BID *Timoptic-XE, Timolol GFS* (gels): daily Gels: shake once before use; wait 10 minutes after administering other eye drops before inserting gel Select products contain the preservative BAK; remove contact lenses before use	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Sinus bradycardia; heart block > 1st degree (except in patients with a pacemaker); cardiogenic shock; uncompensated cardiac failure; bronchospastic disease **SIDE EFFECTS** Burning, stinging, bradycardia/fatigue, bronchospasm with non-selective beta-blockers, itching of the eyes or eyelids, changes in vision, increased light sensitivity **NOTES** All are non-selective beta-blockers except betaxolol which is less likely to cause pulmonary adverse effects in patients with chronic lung disease (e.g., asthma/COPD) *Cosopt PF* (PF stands for "preservative-free") is packaged in single-use containers Some contain sulfites, which can cause allergic reactions

DRUG	DOSING	SIDE EFFECTS/CLINICAL CONCERNS
Cholinergics (Miotics): increase aqueous humor outflow		
Carbachol *(Miostat)*	1-2 drops up to TID	**SIDE EFFECTS** Poor vision at night (due to pupil constriction), corneal clouding, burning (transient), hypotension, bronchospasm, abdominal cramps/GI distress **NOTES** Use with caution in patients with a history of retinal detachment or corneal abrasion
Pilocarpine *(Isopto Carpine)* *Qlosi* is indicated for presbyopia (age-related difficulty focusing on close objects)	Solution: 1-2 drops up to 4 times per day Select products contain the preservative BAK; remove contact lenses before use	
Carbonic Anhydrase Inhibitors: reduce aqueous humor production		
Dorzolamide *(Trusopt*)* **+ timolol *(Cosopt, Cosopt PF)***	*Trusopt:* 1 drop TID *Cosopt:* 1 drop BID	**WARNINGS** Sulfonamide allergy: caution due to the risk of systemic exposure & cross reactivity (especially oral formulations) **SIDE EFFECTS** Eye drops: burning, blurred vision, blepharitis, dry eye Oral acetazolamide: CNS effects (ataxia, confusion), photosensitivity/skin rash (including SJS and TEN), anorexia, nausea, hematological toxicities **NOTES** Acetazolamide is used infrequently for glaucoma; it is used for the prevention and treatment of acute mountain (altitude) sickness Naming Tip: –zolamide = caution with sulfonamide allergy
Brinzolamide *(Azopt)* + brimonidine *(Simbrinza)*	*Azopt:* 1 drop TID	
Acetazolamide – oral, injection Methazolamide – oral	Acetazolamide 250 mg PO 1-4 times per day, or 500 mg ER PO BID Select ophthalmic products contain the preservative BAK; remove contact lenses before use	
Adrenergic Alpha-2 Agonists: increase aqueous humor outflow, reduce aqueous humor production		
Brimonidine *(Alphagan P)* + timolol *(Combigan)* + brinzolamide *(Simbrinza)* Apraclonidine *(Iopidine)* Brimonidine *(Lumify)* (OTC) is indicated for ocular redness	*Alphagan P* and *Iopidine* are dosed TID Select products contain the preservative BAK; remove contact lenses before use	**WARNINGS** CNS depression: caution with heavy machinery, driving **SIDE EFFECTS** Sedation, dry mouth, dry nose
Rho Kinase Inhibitors: increase aqueous humor outflow		
Netarsudil *(Rhopressa)* + latanoprost *(Rocklatan)*	1 drop daily in the evening Contains the preservative BAK; remove contact lenses before use	**SIDE EFFECTS** Burning/eye pain, corneal disease, conjunctival hemorrhage and hyperemia (excess blood vessels) **NOTES** Store in the refrigerator before opening; once opened, store at room temperature for ≤ 6 weeks

**Brand discontinued but name still used in practice.*

CONJUNCTIVITIS

Conjunctivitis, also known as "pink eye," occurs in one or both eyes. Symptoms include swelling, itching, burning and redness of the conjunctiva, the protective membrane that lines the eyelids and covers the white part of the eye (the sclera). Conjunctivitis can be due to a virus, bacteria, an allergen or ocular irritant, such as a chemical or contact lenses. In most cases, conjunctivitis causes mild discomfort, does not harm vision and clears without medical treatment. In some cases, treatment is required.

Viral and bacterial conjunctivitis occur mostly in young children and are highly contagious. Infected children should stay at home and only return to school once treatment begins, unless there are systemic symptoms. To prevent the spread of the infection, any patient with viral or bacterial conjunctivitis should be instructed to:

- Avoid touching their eyes.
- Use proper hand hygiene and wash their hands thoroughly and frequently.
- Change towels and washcloths daily, and do not share towels with others.
- Discard eye cosmetics, particularly mascara.

Chemical conjunctivitis has no specific drug treatment. The irritant should be flushed out of the eyes with saline, and inflammation can be reduced with an NSAID or a steroid eye drop. If contact lenses caused the irritation, they should not be used until the condition clears. It might be helpful to change the type of contact lenses or the brand of disinfectant solution. If the condition is severe, such as a burn, or the chemical is dangerous or unknown, refer for emergency care.

TREATMENT OF CONJUNCTIVITIS BY TYPE

Conjunctivitis is usually viral and self-limiting. Bacterial or allergic conjunctivitis can be treated. Antibiotics are only indicated for bacterial conjunctivitis; the full treatment course should be completed. These treatments can be combined with symptomatic treatment (see Symptom-Based Ophthalmic Treatments).

TYPE	CAUSES	TREATMENT
Viral	Adenovirus (most common), other viruses Most infections are mild, but some can be severe (e.g., zoster virus, HIV)	No topical treatment for common viral conjunctivitis; the infection runs its course over several days to three weeks
Bacterial	*Staphylococcus aureus, Streptococcus pneumoniae, Haemophilus influenzae, Moraxella catarrhalis* More severe cases caused by *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* or *Chlamydia*, which require systemic treatment	Select topical antibiotic eye drops or ointments: **Moxifloxacin *(Vigamox)*** **Neomycin/Polymyxin B/Dexamethasone *(Maxitrol)*** **Ofloxacin *(Ocuflox)*** **Trimethoprim/Polymyxin B *(Polytrim*)*** Azithromycin *(AzaSite)* – store in the refrigerator, stable for 14 days at room temperature Besifloxacin *(Besivance)* Ciprofloxacin *(Ciloxan)* Erythromycin Gentamicin *(Gentak*)* Neomycin/Bacitracin/Polymyxin B *(Neo-Polycin)* Tobramycin *(Tobrex)* Tobramycin/Dexamethasone *(TobraDex, TobraDex ST)* Sulfacetamide *(Bleph-10*)*

TYPE	CAUSES	TREATMENT
Allergic	Common allergens include pollen, dust mites, animal dander, molds **USAGE NOTES:** Prednisolone/steroid eye drops are often used acutely for a severe reaction, but not long term due to risk of ↑ IOP Ophthalmic decongestants can be used to decrease redness caused by allergic conjunctivitis (see Symptom-Based Ophthalmic Treatments)	**MAST CELL STABILIZERS** Cromolyn Lodoxamide *(Alomide)* Nedocromil *(Alocril)* **ANTIHISTAMINES** **Azelastine** **Olopatadine *(Pataday)*** (OTC) Cetirizine *(Zerviate)* Epinastine **ANTIHISTAMINE/MAST CELL STABILIZER** **Ketotifen *(Alaway, Zaditor)*** (OTC) Alcaftadine *(Lastacaft)* (OTC)

**Brand discontinued but name still used in practice.*

BLEPHARITIS

Blepharitis (eyelid inflammation) most commonly involves the eyelid margins (where the eyelashes come out of the skin). In many patients, the condition is chronic and difficult to treat, and in others, it is an acute, short-term condition. The primary symptoms are inflamed, irritated and itchy eyelids. The preferred treatment includes application of a warm compress over the eye for a few minutes to loosen the crusty deposits, then use of a warm, moist washcloth plus a few drops of baby shampoo to wipe away the debris. In some cases, antibiotic ointments, steroid eye drops and/or artificial tears are helpful.

OTHER OCULAR CONDITIONS

SYMPTOM-BASED OPHTHALMIC TREATMENTS

Symptoms can accompany the diseases previously discussed (e.g., conjunctivitis) or they can occur independently. Common ophthalmic symptoms include inflammation, dry eye and eye redness. Inflammation can be reduced with a cold compress and an NSAID eye drop (if mild) or a steroid eye drop (if severe). Artificial tears can help with a "gritty" feeling and alleviate dryness. Chronic dry eye requires more aggressive treatment. Instruct patients to return for follow-up if they do not recover within a few days.

WHY DO MOST EYE DROPS BURN?

Most bottles of eye drops contain multiple doses. Since the drops are being put into the eyes, the bottle must remain free from contamination. A preservative is often added to prevent the growth of microorganisms. The most common preservative used in eye drops is benzalkonium chloride (BAK).

- Preservatives are toxic to bacteria and are irritating to the sensitive tissues in the eyes, which leads to burning/stinging after administration.
  - Some drugs found in eye drops can also cause irritation.
- Contact lenses trap drugs and preservatives against the surface of the eye, making irritation worse.
  - Lenses should be removed before using eye drops and wait 15 minutes after administration before reinserting.
  - This is especially important with drops containing BAK as these can damage the eyes when used with contacts.
- Some eye drops have preservative-free formulations for those unable to tolerate the side effects.
  - Example: *Cosopt PF* (the PF stands for preservative-free).

See the Drug Formulations and Patient Counseling chapter for eye drop administration instructions.

SYMPTOM	EXAMPLES OF TREATMENT	USAGE NOTES
Inflammation	**STEROIDS** **Prednisolone *(Pred Forte, Pred Mild)*** Dexamethasone *(Maxidex, Ozurdex)* Fluorometholone *(Flarex, FML Forte, FML Liquifilm* suspension, ointment) Loteprednol *(Alrex, Lotemax* suspension, ointment, gel) **NSAIDS** **Ketorolac *(Acular,* *Acular LS, Acuvail)*** Nepafenac *(Ilevro, Nevanac)* Bromfenac Diclofenac Flurbiprofen	Steroid eye drops should be used short-term due to risk of ↑ IOP
Dryness	***Refresh*** (OTC) ***Systane*** (OTC) *Liquifilm Tears* (OTC) Others	Often referred to as artificial tears Contain common lubricants – mineral oil, glycerin, propylene glycol, dextran, hypromellose Multiple times daily, as needed
Chronic Dry Eye Disease	**Cyclosporine Emulsion Eye Drops *(Restasis)*** Cyclosporine ophthalmic solution *(Vevye)* Perfluorohexyoctane *(Miebo)* Lifitegrast *(Xiidra)* Loteprednol *(Eysuvis)* Varenicline nasal spray *(Tyrvaya)*	*Restasis* is indicated for keratoconjunctivitis sicca (severe, chronic dry eye syndrome)
Redness	**Naphazoline *(Clear Eyes Redness Relief)*** (OTC) **Naphazoline/Pheniramine *(Naphcon A, Visine A)*** (OTC) **Tetrahydrozoline *(Visine)*** (OTC) Brimonidine *(Lumify)* (OTC)	Can be used to treat allergic conjunctivitis

MEDICATION-INDUCED OPHTHALMIC ISSUES

Medications can cause ocular adverse effects. Most disappear once the drug is discontinued (such as blurry vision from an anticholinergic). In other cases, the damage is permanent (e.g., vision loss with a PDE-5 inhibitor). Patients must be instructed to report visual changes immediately; in most cases, the damage is reversible if the medication is stopped quickly. See the Key Drugs Guy below for specific medications and their effects.

COMMON DRUGS KNOWN TO CAUSE VISION CHANGES OR DAMAGE

Retinal changes/retinopathy
Chloroquine

Hydroxychloroquine

Optic neuropathy
Amiodarone (plus corneal deposits)

Ethambutol

Linezolid

Intraoperative floppy iris syndrome (IFIS); causes difficulty in cataract surgery
Alpha-blockers (e.g., tamsulosin)

Color discrimination
Digoxin (with toxicity) – yellow/green vision

PDE-5 inhibitors (e.g., sildenafil) – greenish tinge around objects

Voriconazole – color vision changes

Abnormal vision/loss
Digoxin (with toxicity) – halos, blurriness

PDE-5 inhibitors – vision loss (one or both eyes; can be permanent)

Isotretinoin – ↓ night vision (can be permanent), dryness, irritation

Topiramate – visual field defects

Vigabatrin – permanent vision loss (high risk)

Voriconazole – abnormal vision, photophobia

COMMON EAR CONDITIONS

Common conditions treated in the ear include ear wax (cerumen) impaction and pain, such as from an outer ear infection (otitis externa). Tinnitus (ringing, roaring or buzzing sounds) is caused by drug toxicity (e.g., salicylates), noise exposure, or it can be idiopathic. There is no effective drug treatment for tinnitus.

EAR WAX (CERUMEN) BLOCKAGE

Ear blockage occurs when cerumen accumulates in the ear or becomes too hard to wash away naturally. For patients with symptoms (e.g., earache, hearing loss), it is removed in a medical office (manually or with irrigation) or with the use of cerumenolytics in a medical office or at home. Cerumenolytics soften ear wax, allowing it to be cleared from the ear more easily. Examples include water, saline solution, mineral oil, hydrogen peroxide and carbamide peroxide *(Debrox)*. Use should be limited to 3 – 5 days, with follow-up after this time (see the Drug Formulations and Patient Counseling chapter for administration instructions).

OTITIS EXTERNA

Otitis externa (also known as swimmer's ear) is inflammation in the outer part of the ear, most commonly caused by an acute bacterial infection. Swimming is a risk factor because excess moisture remaining in the ear promotes microbial growth. Using earplugs while swimming and drying the ear after can prevent recurrent infections. Mild cases can be treated with ear drops containing acetic acid and a glucocorticoid (e.g., *VoSol HC*). Moderate to severe infections require otic antibiotics. Pain can be treated with systemic analgesics (e.g., ibuprofen, acetaminophen). During treatment, patients should stay out of the water, avoid flying due to the pressure changes and avoid using headphones and earplugs.

Common antibiotics include:

- Ciprofloxacin and dexamethasone *(Ciprodex)*
- Ciprofloxacin and hydrocortisone *(Cipro HC)*
- Neomycin, colistin, hydrocortisone and thonzonium *(Cortisporin-TC)*

KEY COUNSELING POINTS

See the Drug Formulations and Patient Counseling chapter for counseling language/layman's terminology and eye drop and ear drop administration instructions.

ALL EYE DROPS

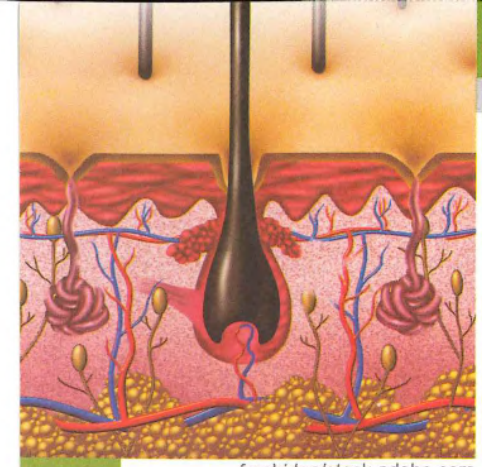
- Can cause stinging or burning (except with preservative-free).
- Wait 5 minutes between drops of the same drug.
- Wait 5 – 10 minutes between drops of different drugs.
- Apply gels last. Wait 10 minutes after the last eye drop before use.
- Remove contact lenses prior to using eye drops. Wait 15 minutes to reinsert.

PROSTAGLANDIN ANALOGS

- Darkening of the iris and an increase in eyelash growth can occur.
- Do not use with bimatoprost; can reduce the effectiveness of other prostaglandins.

Select Guidelines/References

American Academy of Ophthalmology Glaucoma Committee. Preferred Practice Pattern Guidelines. Primary Open-Angle Glaucoma 2020. https://www.aao.org/education/preferred-practice-pattern/primary-open-angle-glaucoma-ppp (accessed 2025 Mar 17).



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CHAPTER 39

COMMON SKIN CONDITIONS

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= Study Tip Gal = Required Formula

BACKGROUND

Patients in the community setting often ask pharmacists for recommendations for skin conditions. A pharmacist should be able to recognize certain skin conditions, such as a blemish that could be skin cancer (see the Oncology chapter), and whether certain features, such as skin discoloration or changes in secretions, are caused by medications (see Study Tip Gal below). If recommending OTC treatment, the patient should be counseled to seek further help if the condition does not improve or worsens.

SELECT DRUGS THAT CAN DISCOLOR SKIN AND SECRETIONS

BROWN
Entacapone
Levodopa
Methyldopa

BROWN/ YELLOW
Nitrofurantoin

BLACK/ GREEN
Iron (stool)

ORANGE/ YELLOW
Sulfasalazine

GREEN
Propofol

RED-ORANGE
Phenazopyridine
Rifampin

RED
Anthracyclines

BLUE
Methylene blue
Mitoxantrone

BLUE-GRAY
Amiodarone

NATURAL PRODUCTS

Several natural products are frequently used to treat or prevent skin conditions. These natural products and uses include:

- Aloe: sunburn and psoriasis; it may provide a soothing effect when used as a gel or lotion.
- Tea tree oil: acne; it may also be helpful for onychomycosis (depending on the dose and application schedule) but will not eradicate the infection in most patients.
- Oral or topical lysine: cold sore (herpes simplex labialis) prevention and treatment.
- Biotin (vitamin B7): hair loss and brittle nails.
- Topical vitamin D: diaper rash and psoriasis.

ACNE VULGARIS

Most people develop acne vulgaris (commonly known as acne) at some point in their life, but it primarily develops in adolescents during puberty. Androgen (male sex hormone) activity is the primary determinant of acne; the presence of bacteria (e.g., *Cutibacterium acnes)* and sebum in oil (sebaceous) glands also contribute. Acne mainly appears on the face, chest, shoulders and back. Diets with a high glycemic index or dairy can worsen acne.

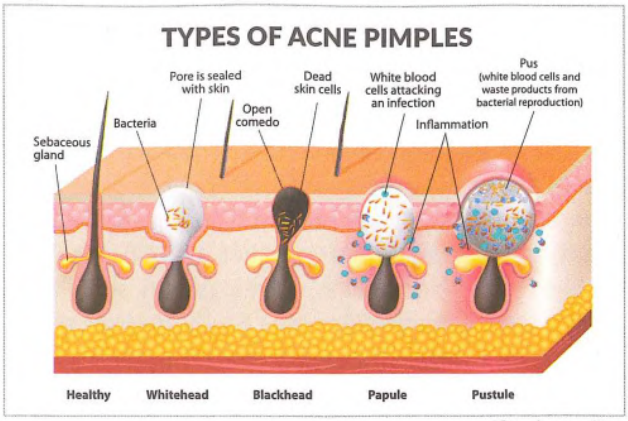
Acne lesions are classified as whiteheads (closed comedones), blackheads (open comedones), papules, pustules and nodules ("cysts"). Treatment is determined by severity: mild (few, occasional pimples), moderate (inflammatory papules) or severe (nodules).

Acne treatment includes topical (e.g., benzoyl peroxide, retinoids, antibiotics, salicylic acid) and systemic agents (e.g., antibiotics, isotretinoin). When using topical therapies, combination therapy with more than one agent is preferred to optimize efficacy; commercially available combination products can be used to facilitate adherence. See the Study Tip Gal on next page for a summary of treatment.

- Benzoyl peroxide (BPO) is a topical OTC medication recommended for most patients with acne. It is also available by prescription, including in combinations with topical hydrocortisone, retinoids (e.g., adapalene, tretinoin) or antibiotics (e.g., erythromycin, clindamycin).
- Retinoids (e.g., topical tretinoin) are vitamin A derivatives that work by reducing cohesion of follicular epithelial cells, increasing epithelial cell turnover and unblocking pores to prevent acne. They are also used to reduce wrinkles. Most are available by prescription only for treating acne; adapalene is the only retinoid available OTC.
  - Retinoids are teratogenic. They must be avoided in pregnancy or breastfeeding (see Drug Use in Pregnancy and Lactation chapter).
  - They are well-tolerated when used topically; mild skin irritation (redness, drying) and photosensitivity can occur. Retinoids should be applied nightly, using a pea-sized amount. This can be decreased to every other night if irritation occurs. A moisturizer, followed by sunscreen, should be used each morning.

- ☐ Retinoids take 4 – 12 weeks to work, and acne can worsen initially. Minocycline can be used with topical retinoids to help reduce worsening. Tazarotene often works better than tretinoin; it is used for difficult cases.
- ☐ The oral retinoid isotretinoin has many safety considerations. Isotretinoin is FDA-approved for severe, recalcitrant nodular acne only, though it is also used off-label for moderate, treatment-resistant acne. Pregnancy, lipid and liver function tests are required (as part of its iPLEDGE REMS program).

- Oral tetracyclines (e.g., doxycycline) are commonly used systemic antibiotics; use is typically reserved for moderate to severe acne.
- Salicylic acid is available OTC in many formulations, including washes, "medicated pads" and lotions.
- Azelaic acid is a topical dicarboxylic acid available OTC and by prescription as a cream, foam or gel for acne and rosacea.



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- Some females find benefit with oral contraceptive pills, especially if acne occurs around the menstrual cycle or if irregular menstruation or symptoms of excess androgen are present.
- Spironolactone, an aldosterone receptor antagonist with antiandrogen effects, is not FDA approved for acne but may be useful in some females.
- Clascoterone, a topical androgen receptor inhibitor cream, is an alternative treatment for mild acne in patients age 12 and older.

ACNE TREATMENT SUMMARY

Acne treatment is determined by acne severity and success of past treatments.

	MILD	MODERATE	SEVERE
FIRST-LINE TREATMENT	Topicals: BPO or retinoid or Topicals: combination*	Topicals: combination* or PO antibiotic + BPO + topical retinoid (+/– topical antibiotic)	Topicals: combination* + PO antibiotic or PO isotretinoin
ALTERNATIVE TREATMENT	Add topical retinoid or BPO, switch to another retinoid or topical dapsone	Other combination*, switch PO antibiotic, add combined OCP or spironolactone (females) or PO isotretinoin	Switch PO antibiotic, add combined OCP or spironolactone (females) or PO isotretinoin (if not previously tried)

**Topical combination therapy includes the following: BPO + topical antibiotic, BPO + retinoid or BPO + retinoid + topical antibiotic.*

DRUGS	NOTES	SAFETY/COUNSELING
Topical Retinoids		
Tretinoin *(Atralin, Renova, Retin-A, Retin-A Micro, Altreno, Avita)* Rx: cream, gel, lotion Clindamycin/tretinoin gel *(Veltin, Ziana)* Tretinoin/BPO cream *(Twyneo)*	Topical retinoids should be avoided in pregnancy Tretinoin: *Retin-A Micro* (microsphere gel) and *Avita* (polymerized cream or gel): slower release, less skin irritation *Altreno* (0.05% lotion): less irritating Tazarotene: *Arazlo:* approved in age ≥ 9 years *Fabior:* stronger, more irritating	Photosensitivity (limit sun exposure). Apply daily, usually at bedtime, 20 mins after washing face. If irritation occurs, use lower strength or decrease frequency to every other night. May need to reduce contact initially (wash off if skin is irritated). A pea-sized amount is sufficient (for facial application); smooth over the entire surface of the face, not just on acne. Avoid salicylic acid scrubs or astringents; wash only with mild soap twice daily. Takes 4-12 weeks to see response; may worsen acne initially.
Adapalene *(Differin)* OTC: gel *(Differin* gel 0.1%) Rx: adapalene/BPO gel *(Epiduo, Epiduo Forte)*		
Tazarotene Rx: cream *(Tazorac)*, foam *(Fabior)*, gel *(Tazorac)*, lotion *(Arazlo)* Halobetasol/tazarotene lotion *(Duobrii)*		
Trifarotene Rx: cream *(Aklief)*		
Other Topical Acne Products		
Benzoyl peroxide (BPO) OTC: many products including *Benzac, Clearasil, PanOxyl* Rx: BPO/hydrocortisone *(Vanoxide-HC)*	Start with 2.5-5% BPO; generally adequate and less irritating than the higher strengths	Can bleach clothing and hair. Photosensitivity (limit sun exposure).
TOPICAL ANTIBIOTICS AND COMBINATIONS All Rx only Clindamycin *(Cleocin-T, Clindagel)* Clindamycin/BPO *(BenzaClin*, Acanya, Neuac, Onexton)* Dapsone gel *(Aczone)* Erythromycin *(Erygel)* Erythromycin/BPO *(Benzamycin)* Minocycline foam *(Amzeeq, Zilxi)*	*Benzamycin:* Add indicated amount of 70% ethyl alcohol to the vial and immediately shake to dissolve erythromycin Add solution in the vial to the gel; stir until homogenous (1-1.5 mins) Place a 3-month expiration date on the label following mixing; keep refrigerated *Winlevi:* Keep refrigerated before dispensing; store at room temp after dispensing	Topical antibiotics should be a part of combination therapy (e.g., with BPO) to decrease the risk of antibiotic resistance. Dapsone gel: avoid in G6PD deficiency. Clascoterone: HPA axis suppression may occur during or after treatment; more likely with use over a large surface area, prolonged use and use with occlusive dressings.
OTHERS OTC: **Salicylic acid** *(Clearasil,* others) OTC: **Azelaic acid** lower strengths *(Paula's Choice, The Ordinary,* others) Rx: **Azelaic acid** cream, gel, foam *(Azelex* 15%, *Finacea* 20%) Rx: Clascoterone cream *(Winlevi)*		

DRUGS	NOTES	SAFETY/COUNSELING
Oral Retinoids		
Isotretinoin ***(Absorica, Amnesteem,*** *Claravis, Myorisan, Zenatane)* Rx: capsules 0.5-1 mg/kg/day, divided BID with food for 15-20 weeks	Only FDA-approved for severe, refractory nodular acne. Patients who can get pregnant must sign informed consent form about birth defects. Must have 2 negative pregnancy tests prior to starting. Do not get pregnant for 1 month before, while taking the drug, or for 1 month after the drug is stopped. Do not breastfeed or donate blood until at least 1 month has passed after the drug is stopped. Do not use with vitamin A supplements, tetracyclines, progestin-only contraceptives, St. John's wort or steroids. Swallow capsule whole; can puncture and sprinkle on applesauce or ice cream but swallowing contents that have been removed from the capsule may irritate the esophagus.	**BOXED WARNING** Birth defects have been documented; must not be used by patients who are pregnant or may become pregnant. Can only be dispensed by a pharmacy registered with the REMS (iPLEDGE) program. 1-month Rx at a time, fill within 7 days with yellow sticker attached. **WARNINGS** Dry skin, lips, dry eyes/eye irritation (may cause difficulty wearing contact lenses), ↓ night vision (may be permanent), arthralgias, skeletal hyperostosis (calcification of ligaments that attach to the spine), osteoporosis, psychiatric issues (depression, psychosis, risk of suicide), ↑ cholesterol (TG) and BG. **Counseling:** pregnancy testing must be repeated on a monthly basis. 2 forms of birth control are required (cannot use a progestin-only pill). Carry bottled water, eye drops and lip balm.
Oral Antibiotics Used for Acne		
Doxycycline *(Avidoxy, Doryx, Oracea, Mondoxyne NL, Morgidox*, TargaDOX,* ***Vibramycin****)* Rx: capsule, tablet, suspension 50-100 mg BID; for patients age ≥ 8 years **Minocycline** ***(Minocin, Solodyn****, *Minolira*, Ximino*)* Rx: capsule, tablet IR formulations: 50-100 mg BID; for patients age ≥ 8 years XR formulations: 1 mg/kg daily; only for patients age ≥ 12 years Sarecycline *(Seysara)* Rx: tablet	Doxycycline and minocycline are more effective than tetracycline in eradicating *C. acnes.* Sarecycline is a tetracycline derivative for non-nodular moderate to severe acne. Sulfamethoxazole/trimethoprim and macrolides (e.g., azithromycin) are other antibiotics that may be considered.	Tetracyclines (e.g., doxycycline, minocycline, sarecycline) can cause photosensitivity, fetal harm if administered during pregnancy and permanent discoloration in teeth if used when teeth are forming (up to age 8 years).

**Brand discontinued but name still used in practice.*

COLD SORES

- Cold sores (herpes simplex labialis) are common and highly contagious. Infection is typically caused by herpes simplex virus type 1 (HSV-1), but it can be caused by HSV-2 transmitted through sexual contact. The virus spreads mostly with active lesions; kissing and sharing drinks can transmit the infection.
- Sore eruption is preceded by prodromal symptoms (e.g., tingling, itching, soreness). In most patients, the sore reappears in the same location; the most common site is the junction between the upper and lower lip. Outbreaks can be triggered by fatigue, stress, dental work and skin irritation (e.g., sun exposure, acid peels).
- The prodromal period is the optimal time to start treatment to reduce blister duration. Topicals shorten the outbreak duration by up to one day. Oral antivirals shorten the duration by up to two days. If recurrences are frequent (> 4 times/year), daily medications for chronic suppression can be used.
- The natural product lysine is used commonly for cold sore prevention and treatment.

DRUGS	NOTES	SAFETY/COUNSELING
OTC **Docosanol *(Abreva)*** **Rx** **Acyclovir cream/ointment *(Zovirax)*** Acyclovir buccal tablets *(Sitavig)* Penciclovir topical cream *(Denavir)*	Oral antivirals are more effective (see Infectious Diseases III chapter). Lolostock/Shutterstock.com	*Abreva* cream: apply 5× daily at first sign of outbreak, continue until healed. *Zovirax* cream: apply 5× daily for 4 days. *Sitavig* tablet: apply one 50 mg tablet as a single dose to the upper gum region. *Denavir* cream: apply every 2 hours during waking hours for 4 days.

DANDRUFF

- Seborrheic dermatitis is a common form of eczema that causes flaking, itchy skin on the face, back, chest or scalp. Dandruff is a mild form of seborrheic dermatitis that involves the scalp, causing white, itchy flakes of dead skin cells in the hair. These flakes can fall on the shoulders, back or clothing.
- Dandruff can be due to eczema or fungal overgrowth; it is worsened by hormones, weather or shampoo.
- An OTC dandruff shampoo can be tried first. If ineffective, ketoconazole antifungal shampoo can be used.

DRUGS	NOTES	SAFETY/COUNSELING
OTC **Ketoconazole 1% shampoo *(Nizoral A-D)*, selenium sulfide** *(Dandrex*)*, **pyrithione zinc *(Head & Shoulders)*, coal tar shampoos *(T/Gel)*,** *Suave* or store brand "dandruff" shampoos **Rx** **Ketoconazole 2% shampoo** Topical ketoconazole comes in many formulations: cream, foam, gel, shampoo	 lovemydesigns/Shutterstock.com	Rub shampoo in well, leave in for 5 minutes, then rinse out. Shampoo daily. If the shampoo stops working, switch products. ***Nizoral A-D*** Apply twice weekly, for up to 8 weeks. Do not use if open sores on scalp. Can cause skin irritation.

**Brand discontinued but name still used in practice.*

ALOPECIA (HAIR LOSS)

Hair gradually thins as part of the aging process. Other causes of hair loss include hormonal changes, medical conditions and drugs. Medications work modestly for hair loss; many people will seek cosmetic solutions or surgical intervention (e.g., hair transplantation).

- The most common cause of hair loss is hereditary male-pattern baldness.
- Hormonal changes in females that result in hair loss are associated with pregnancy, childbirth or menopause.
- Some medical conditions that can cause hair loss include hypothyroidism, scalp infections and some autoimmune conditions (e.g., lupus, alopecia areata).
- Chemotherapeutics frequently cause alopecia due to their cytotoxic effects on rapidly dividing cells, such as hair cells. Other drugs that can cause alopecia include valproate, lamotrigine, tacrolimus, heparin, interferons and some oral contraceptives.
- Biotin, zinc, selenium and vitamin D deficiency can contribute to hair loss.

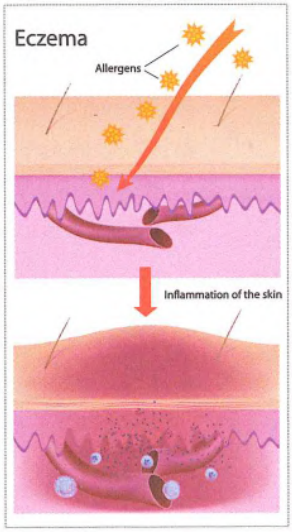
DRUGS	NOTES	SAFETY/COUNSELING
Finasteride *(Propecia)* Rx: tablet 1 mg daily; can take ≥ 3 months to begin to see effect **Finasteride *(Proscar)*** 5 mg daily for BPH	Finasteride inhibits 5-alpha reductase type 2 thereby ↓ dihydrotestosterone (hormone involved in male-pattern baldness); do not use *Propecia* in patients taking *Proscar* for BPH Must be used indefinitely or condition reappears	**CONTRAINDICATION** Pregnancy **WARNING** Hazardous drug for females of childbearing potential, can harm a male fetus **SIDE EFFECTS** Sexual side effects (*Propecia* has a lower risk compared to *Proscar* due to lower dose); see the Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia (BPH) chapter
Baricitinib *(Olumiant)* Rx: tablet	Janus kinase inhibitor approved for severe alopecia areata Treatment may need to be continued to maintain improvement	**BOXED WARNINGS** Serious infection (e.g., herpes zoster), ↑ rate of malignancy, thrombosis, major cardiovascular events, mortality
Minoxidil topical *(Rogaine,* others) OTC: 5% foam, 2% and 5% solution Rx: tablets for hypertension (rarely used)	5% strength is more effective but causes more facial hair growth Must be used indefinitely or condition reoccurs	Flammable; do not use near a heat source Can be used by males or females
Bimatoprost *(Latisse)* Rx: solution For thinning eyelashes (hypotrichosis) 	Do not use with prostaglandin analogs used for glaucoma (IOP may increase)	May cause itchy eyes and/or eye redness. Eyelid skin darkening may occur, may be reversible. Hair growth may occur in other skin areas that the solution frequently touches. Apply nightly, with applicator brush, to skin at the base of the upper eyelashes only (do not apply to the lower lid). Blot excess. Dispose of applicator after one use. If stopped, lashes will return to their previous appearance.

iStock.com/Marina79

ECZEMA (ATOPIC DERMATITIS)

Eczema is a general term for many types of skin inflammation and is used interchangeably with atopic dermatitis.

- Eczema is most common in young children and infants but can occur at any age.
- Eczema appears as itchy, red, dry skin rashes and may turn into crusty, scaly sores.
- Common sites include elbows, behind the knees/ears, face (often cheeks), buttocks, hands and feet.
- Avoid triggers such as environmental irritants, allergens (e.g., soaps, perfumes), stress or weather changes.
- Hydration and moisturizers reduce severity. Prescription or OTC antihistamines may reduce itching.
- Treatment can include topical steroids (occasional oral courses, if needed) or topical calcineurin inhibitors.
- Topical phosphodiesterase-4 inhibitors (crisaborole) and topical Janus kinase inhibitors (ruxolitinib) are options for mild to moderate cases.
- In severe, refractory cases, monoclonal antibodies (e.g., dupilumab, nemolizumab), oral immunosuppressants (e.g., cyclosporine, methotrexate) or oral Janus kinase inhibitors (e.g., abrocitinib) may be used. Other systemic immunosuppressants may be used off-label (see the Systemic Steroids & Autoimmune Conditions chapter).

DRUGS	NOTES	SAFETY/COUNSELING
OTC Moisturizers with petrolatum, lanolin *(Aquaphor, Eucerin, Keri,* others) **Rx** **Topical steroids** See "Inflammation and Rash" and "Potencies of Topical Steroids" sections in this chapter. **Topical calcineurin inhibitors** Tacrolimus *(Protopic)* – ointment Pimecrolimus *(Elidel)* – cream Other treatments: **Topical phosphodiesterase-4 inhibitor** Crisaborole *(Eucrisa)* – 2% ointment **Monoclonal antibodies (interleukin receptor antagonists)** Dupilumab *(Dupixent)* – SC Tralokinumab *(Adbry)* – SC **Janus kinase inhibitors** Abrocitinib *(Cibinqo)* – oral tablet Upadacitinib *(Rinvoq)* – oral tablet Ruxolitinib *(Opzelura)* – cream	 Alila Medical Media/Shutterstock.com	**All topical products:** Wash hands after application Apply a thin layer only to the affected skin BID Use the smallest amount needed to control symptoms **Topical calcineurin inhibitors:** Do not use in children age < 2 years; associated with lymphoma and skin cancer Avoid exposure to natural or artificial sunlight Side effects include headache, skin burning, itching, cough, flu-like symptoms **Monoclonal antibodies:** Avoid use of live vaccines Injection site reactions and upper respiratory tract infections are common side effects **Janus kinase inhibitors:** Boxed warnings include serious infections (e.g., herpes zoster), ↑ rate of malignancy, thrombosis, major cardiovascular events, mortality

HYPERHIDROSIS

Hyperhidrosis is excessive sweating; it is diagnosed based on a physical exam and history of symptoms. Treatment depends on where the excessive sweating occurs on the body (e.g., underarms, hands, feet).

DRUGS	NOTES	SAFETY/COUNSELING
Rx Glycopyrronium topical *(Qbrexza)* Sofpironium *(Sofdra)* **OTC** Antiperspirants *(Secret Clinical Strength, Certain Dri* and others)	*Qbrexza* and sofpironium are topical anticholinergics.	*Qbrexza* and sofpironium: Do not use in medical conditions that can be exacerbated by anticholinergics (e.g., glaucoma, ulcerative colitis, myasthenia gravis). Use on clean, dry skin; wash hands with soap and water afterward.

FUNGAL INFECTIONS: SKIN

ATHLETE'S FOOT *(TINEA PEDIS)*

- A fungal infection of the foot caused by various fungi (commonly *trichophyton rubrum)*.
- Symptoms include feet itching, peeling, redness, mild burning and sometimes sores. This is a common infection, particularly among those using public pools, showers and locker rooms.
- Diagnosis is usually based on nonspecific symptoms, such as itching. If the diagnosis is unclear, skin cells can be scraped off and viewed under a microscope as confirmation.
- Treat with topical antifungal, except severe cases.

RINGWORM *(TINEA CORPORIS)*

- Not a worm, but a fungal skin infection that can appear anywhere on the body and typically looks like circular, red, flat sores (one or more, may overlap), usually with dry, scaly skin. Occasionally the ring-like presentation is not present – just itchy, red skin. The outer part of the sore is raised while the skin in the middle appears normal.
- Can spread person-to-person or by contact with infected animals.
- Most cases are treated topically.
- *Tinea capitis* is "ringworm" on the scalp. This often affects young children and requires systemic therapy with the drugs used for onychomycosis.

JOCK ITCH *(TINEA CRURIS)*

- Affects the genitals, inner thighs and buttocks. Jock itch is not very contagious but can be spread person-to-person with close contact.
- The rash is red, itchy and can be ring-shaped.
- Keep the skin dry; use a clean towel after showering and treat with a topical antifungal.
- Change underwear at least daily.

CUTANEOUS *CANDIDA* INFECTIONS

- Topical *Candida* infections cause red, itchy rashes, most commonly in the groin, armpits or anywhere the skin folds. The infection can be in unusual places, such as under the breasts, if the skin is moist.
- More likely in patients with obesity because they often have more skin folds. Diabetes is another risk factor.
- Fungal infections can occasionally appear on the skin next to a fingernail. For a suspected bacterial infection in this area, OTC antibiotic topicals or mupirocin can be used.
- *Candida* can cause diaper rash in infants (see Diaper Rash section).

FUNGAL TREATMENTS FOR THE SKIN

DRUGS	NOTES	SAFETY/COUNSELING
OTC **Terbinafine *(Lamisil AT)*** Cream, gel, spray **Butenafine *(Lotrimin Ultra)*** Cream **Clotrimazole *(Lotrimin AF, Pro-Ex Antifungal, Shopko Athletes Foot)*** Cream **Miconazole *(Lotrimin AF, Cruex, Desenex Jock Itch)*** Powder, spray Miconazole/petrolatum *(Baza)* – for moisture barrier, used in geriatrics **Tolnaftate *(Tinactin)*** Cream, powder, spray **Undecylenic acid** *(Toelieva,* others) Ointment, solution **Rx** **Betamethasone/Clotrimazole** *(Lotrisone*)*: for tinea with inflammation and itching Cream, lotion **Ketoconazole** *(Extina*)* Cream, foam Luliconazole *(Luzu)* 1% Cream	 iStock.com/reanas Rings can be single or overlap. Topical antifungals come in many formulations: ■ Creams work best and are used in most cases. ■ Solutions can be easier to apply in hairy areas. ■ Powders do not work well for treatment but may be used for prevention, such as in shoes after a gym workout.	If infection is on the foot, do not walk barefoot to avoid spreading it; wear sandals in public showers to avoid catching it. Apply medication 1-2 inches beyond the rash. Use for at least 2-4 weeks, even if it appears healed. Reduce moisture in infected area. Note the same name in OTC products *(Lotrimin AF)* can refer to different active ingredients; be careful with recommendations to avoid mix-ups.

**Brand discontinued but name still used in practice.*

FUNGAL INFECTIONS: TOENAIL & FINGERNAIL

- Onychomycosis, a fungal infection of the nail often caused by *tinea unguium,* can cause pain, discomfort, nail disfigurement and physical limitations (e.g., difficulty standing, walking).
- Topical drugs are limited to mild cases and patients who cannot tolerate systemic therapies; they are not potent enough to cure most infections.
- Itraconazole and terbinafine are indicated and commonly used to treat fungal nail infections; fluconazole and posaconazole are used off-label. Griseofulvin is rarely used.
- It takes a long time for the nail bed appearance to improve – sometimes up to a year in toenails. Toenails take longer to treat than fingernails and are more commonly infected.
- Pulse therapy (intermittent) can be used to reduce costs and possibly toxicity but may not be as effective.
- A 20% potassium hydroxide smear is essential for diagnosis; other conditions produce a similar presentation.

DRUGS	NOTES	SAFETY/COUNSELING
Rx **Terbinafine** – oral 250 mg PO daily for 6 weeks (fingernail) or 12 weeks (toenail) Itraconazole *(Sporanox)* – oral 200 mg PO daily × 12 weeks or "pulse-dosing" (fingernails only): 200 mg BID × 1 week, 3 weeks off then repeat 1-week course Ciclopirox *(Loprox)* – topical, used QHS Tavaborole *(Kerydin*)* – topical oxaborole antifungal Efinaconazole *(Jublia)* – topical azole antifungal	 iStock.com/Manuel-F-O Ciclopirox is used in combination with orals; poor efficacy when used alone Tavaborole and efinaconazole are applied topically × 48 weeks	Systemic drugs used for nail fungal infections are hepatotoxic (monitor LFTs), QT-prolonging (avoid in QT risk) and CYP450 3A4 substrates and inhibitors (see Infectious Diseases III chapter for systemic azoles). Nausea and diarrhea are common. Itraconazole: boxed warning to avoid use in heart failure. Requires gastric acid for absorption; cannot use with strong acid-suppressing drugs. Recurrence is common. Practice proper foot care and keep the nails dry. Keep blood glucose controlled. Do not smoke.

**Brand discontinued but name still used in practice.*

FUNGAL INFECTIONS: VAGINAL

Vaginal fungal infections are common. Approximately 75% of females will have at least one episode, and half of these will have recurrence; a small percentage of females have chronic infections. Hormones affect the pH of the vagina, making menstruating females more susceptible. Treatment decisions around menstruation are important, as infections occur most commonly during the week before menstruation. Treatment can begin during or after menstruation. Tampons should not be used with vaginally inserted medications.

- Vaginal fungal infections are more common during pregnancy. Pregnant patients should consult their physician. Longer treatment courses (i.e., 7 – 10 days) are required.
- Symptoms primarily include itching with possible soreness and pain (burning) during urination or sex. Some patients have a cottage-cheese like discharge (white, thick, clumpy).
- Diagnosis confirmed with a vaginal culture to check for fungal growth, while a pH test can be used to help rule out other conditions. A pH > 4.5 is consistent with bacterial vaginosis or trichomoniasis infection.
  - ☐ OTC test kits are available to test vaginal pH.
- Testing is not necessary if the patient has been seen by a physician for the initial infection and is able to recognize the symptoms. Self-treatment with OTC products is appropriate.
- If there are more than four infections in a year, or if symptoms recur within two months, refer to the physician to rule out any causative underlying conditions (e.g., diabetes, HIV, pregnancy, irritation from repeated douching or use of lubricants).
- Females taking high-dose estrogen, hormone replacement therapy, steroids, other immune-suppressing drugs or antibiotics are at elevated risk. Antibiotic use can kill the normal flora and lead to fungal overgrowth.
- There is mixed data on whether Lactobacillus or yogurt with active cultures reduce infection occurrence.
- If self-treating, counsel that the creams and suppositories are oil-based medications that can weaken latex condoms and diaphragms thus decreasing protection against pregnancy. Patients should avoid sexual intercourse during treatment.
- Patients can take the following steps to reduce their risk of future infections:
  - ☐ Keep the vaginal area clean
  - ☐ Wipe from front to back after using the restroom
  - ☐ Use cotton underwear, avoid tight-fitting clothing
  - ☐ Change pads/tampons often
  - ☐ Remove wet swimsuits or clothing promptly
  - ☐ Avoid douches or other products that alter pH

DRUGS	NOTES	SAFETY/COUNSELING
Mild-moderate, infrequent infection: 1, 3 or 7 day treatment with vaginal cream, ointment, tablet or suppository **OTC, topical** **Clotrimazole** **Miconazole *(Monistat 3,* others)** **Rx, topical** **Butoconazole *(Gynazole-1,*** others) Terconazole **Rx, oral** **Fluconazole *(Diflucan)*** 150 mg PO × 1 Ibrexafungerp *(Brexafemme)* 300 mg PO BID × 1 day Complicated infection, pregnant: 7–10 days treatment, or refer to healthcare provider **Recurrent vulvovaginal candidiasis:** Oteseconazole *(Vivjoa)* - for prevention of infection in females (not of reproductive potential)	 rumruay/stock.adobe.com Counsel on ways to avoid future infections (see previous text) A male sexual partner can be tested if female partner's infections are recurrent (not common)	**Counseling for OTC antifungals:** Prior to using the product, wash the external genital area with mild soap and water, and pat dry with a towel. Insert applicator, suppository or vaginal tab at night before bed. Lying down immediately after insertion helps retain the medicine inside the vagina; a protective pad can be used. The creams and suppositories are oil-based medications that can weaken latex condoms and diaphragms; avoid sexual intercourse. If you get your menstrual cycle during treatment, you may continue the treatment. Do not use tampons during treatment. Complete entire course of treatment. Medical care is warranted if symptoms persist/ return within 2 months after using an OTC product, or if > 4 infections per year.

DIAPER RASH

Diaper rash is very common in infants and toddlers. Their skin is sensitive, and when exposed to urine, stool and friction from a diaper, a rash appears. Once damaged, the skin is susceptible to bacteria and yeast overgrowth.

PREVENTION

- Change diaper often; do not cover with plastic. Leave diaper off, if possible, to let the skin air-dry.
- Clean well with unscented wipes or plain water.
- Use a skin protectant:
  - Petrolatum ointment is a good preventative ointment containing vitamins A & D.
  - Petrolatum with zinc oxide (a desiccant, to dry the skin) may be preferred if prone to rash.

TREATMENT

- Clotrimazole, miconazole, nystatin: for stubborn rashes if yeast is thought to be involved.
- Hydrocortisone 0.5 – 1% cream can be applied twice a day, but not for more than several days at a time. Hydrocortisone can be used in combination with topical antifungals.

DRUGS	SAFETY/COUNSELING
OTC **Petrolatum/zinc oxide *(Desitin, Boudreaux's Butt Paste, Triple Paste)*** Petrolatum *(A&D Ointment,* others) **Rx** Miconazole/zinc oxide/petrolatum *(Vusion)*	Infants should be referred to the physician (especially if under 6 months); refer toddlers if condition appears serious or worsens. Diaper rashes can have more than one contributing organism. Topical antibiotics can be needed if bacterial involvement is suspected. Topical antifungals can be needed if fungal involvement is suspected. Low-potency topical steroids may be used short-term.

HEMORRHOIDS

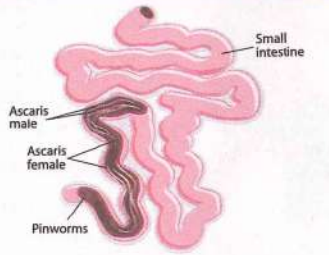
Hemorrhoids are swollen blood vessels in the lower rectum. They are often due to constipation and straining during a bowel movement. Rectal tissue is sensitive and has a rich blood vessel supply, making it susceptible to swelling or engorgement. Symptoms include pruritus, burning and rectal bleeding with bright red blood.

- Increasing fiber intake can reduce straining. Soluble fiber products such as psyllium absorb water in the intestine and promote peristalsis, making the stool easier to pass. A stool softener (e.g., docusate) can reduce straining.
- Phenylephrine is a vasoconstrictor that shrinks the hemorrhoid and reduces burning and itching.
- Hydrocortisone *(Anusol-HC,* others) comes in anal suppositories and topicals, including creams and wipes. These reduce itching and inflammation.
- Witch hazel *(Tucks Medicated Cooling Pads)* is a mild astringent that can relieve mild itching.
- Barriers (skin protectants) to reduce irritation from stool/urine are helpful in some cases (petrolatum, others – see Diaper Rash section).
- There are many combination products. Some contain mineral oil (skin protectant), zinc oxide (desiccant) or pramoxine (anesthetic).

DRUGS	NOTES	SAFETY/COUNSELING
OTC **Phenylephrine topical *(Preparation H,* others)**	Recommend suppositories for internal hemorrhoids and topical creams/ointments/wipes for external symptoms.	Clean the skin first with mild soap and warm water. Gently pat dry. Apply ointment externally up to 5× daily. Suppository: hold wrapped suppository container with rounded end up, separate the foil tabs and peel apart, remove from wrapper, insert into the rectum up to 4× daily including at night and after bowel movements.

PINWORM *(VERMICULARIS)*

Pinworm infection most commonly occurs in children and presents as anal itching. Anthelmintics (i.e., drugs used to kill parasitic worms), such as mebendazole, pyrantel pamoate and albendazole, are active against *Enterobius vermicularis*. The "tape" test is used to identify eggs: stick a piece of tape around the anus in the morning prior to voiding/defecating. The tape is removed and brought to a healthcare provider, who examines it under a microscope to look for eggs. It can take up to three tape tests to identify the eggs. Pinworms are often resistant to treatment; reinfection is common. Wash hands frequently and treat the entire household.

DRUGS	NOTES	SAFETY/COUNSELING
OTC **Pyrantel pamoate** *(Reese's Pinworm Medicine)* Suspension **Rx** Albendazole Mebendazole *(Emverm)*	**HELMINTHS**  designua/stock.adobe.com	Treatment with both OTC and prescription medications involves two doses administered 2 weeks apart (the second dose is used to prevent reinfection). Albendazole and Mebendazole are used for more severe/systemic worm infections. Both can cause headache, nausea and are hepatotoxic. In some cases, such as treating CNS infections, steroids and antiseizure medications will be given with the anthelmintic. When albendazole is used to treat systemic infections, it must be taken with a high-fat meal (to increase absorption).

LICE AND SCABIES

Scabies (mites) and lice are spread mainly through close body contact and treated with some of the same medications. For example, permethrin can be used to treat either of these conditions, though the concentrations and formulations are different. Permethrin cream 5% is used to treat scabies, while permethrin lotion 1% is available OTC and is used to treat lice. Permethrin can also be purchased in shampoo and spray formulations. Topical ivermectin is approved to treat head lice and is available OTC. Oral ivermectin can be used in patients who weigh at least 15 kg, though use is off-label for both conditions, and it can be difficult to tolerate. Possible adverse effects of oral ivermectin include lymph node enlargement, arthralgias, skin tenderness, pruritus and fever.

- Lice, *Pediculus humanus capitis*, occurs most commonly in elementary school-age children.
- Topical OTC drugs are generally first-line, such as pyrethrins and permethrin, though the efficacy of pyrethrins has decreased due to resistance. Avoid these with a chrysanthemum or ragweed allergy.
- Malathion lotion 0.5% is an organophosphate only for use on persons age 6 years or older. It can cause skin irritation and is flammable; do not smoke or use electrical heat sources (e.g., hair dryers, heated curlers, flat irons) near hair that is saturated with malathion.
- If the same medication has been used several times, it may be ineffective, and a different medication should be used.
- Repeating the procedure and removing nits (lice eggs) from hair, bedding and elsewhere is essential:
  - ☐ Wash clothes and bedding in hot water, followed by a hot dryer.
  - ☐ If something cannot be washed, seal it in an air-proof bag for two weeks or dry clean. Vacuum the carpet well. Soak combs and brushes in hot water for 10 minutes. Check other family members in the household.
  - ☐ Do not use conditioner before using lice medicine. Do not re-wash the hair for 1 – 2 days after treatment.
  - ☐ Most products must be kept on hair for 10 mins before rinsing to be effective; malathion should be left on for 8 – 12 hours.
  - ☐ After treatment, use a nit comb to remove nits and lice every 2 – 3 days. Continue to check for 2 – 3 weeks to be sure all lice and nits are gone.
  - ☐ Most products require re-treatment on days 7 – 10 to kill surviving hatched lice before they produce new eggs. Check the product package since timing of re-treatment can vary.

DRUGS	NOTES	SAFETY/COUNSELING
LICE **OTC** **Permethrin 1% lotion *(Nix)*** age ≥ 2 months **Pyrethrin/Piperonyl butoxide *(RID, LiceMD)*** age ≥ 2 years Ivermectin lotion *(Sklice)* age ≥ 6 months **Rx** Spinosad *(Natroba)* age ≥ 6 months Malathion lotion *(Ovide*)* age ≥ 6 years **SCABIES** **Rx** Permethrin 5% cream Ivermectin oral *(Stromectol)*	 iStock.com/wildpixel	Drug of choice for lice: OTC topical treatment such as permethrin or pyrethrin/piperonyl butoxide. May require repeat treatment on days 7-10 (product specific). Malathion: flammable, do not use near heat source or open flame. Spinosad: works well, expensive. In addition to OTC treatment, remove the live lice and nits by inspecting the hair in 1-inch segments and using a lice comb. Nits are "cemented" to the hair shaft and do not fall off after treatment. Many OTC products require removal of live lice and nits for maximum efficacy. Nit removal requires multiple efforts, which should be continued for at least 2 weeks after treatment. See previous page.

**Brand discontinued but name still used in practice.*

MINOR WOUNDS

Minor wounds include cuts, abrasions, bites and burns. Some can be treated with simple first aid, while others, depending on the severity, may need medical attention. Puncture wounds should be referred to a medical provider. Make sure tetanus vaccine is current (booster every 10 years, after series has been completed). If the wound is dirty, a repeat tetanus vaccine may be required if it is > 5 years since vaccination.

Some chronic wounds (e.g., pressure ulcers) require management by wound care providers. Debridement of chronic wounds is often needed to remove the damaged or contaminated tissue since it can prevent healing. There are several methods of debridement, but the most common method is enzymatic debridement, which is done with the application of collagenase ointment *(Santyl)*. Other debridement methods, including surgical debridement, are used for more complicated wounds.

CUTS, LACERATIONS AND ABRASIONS

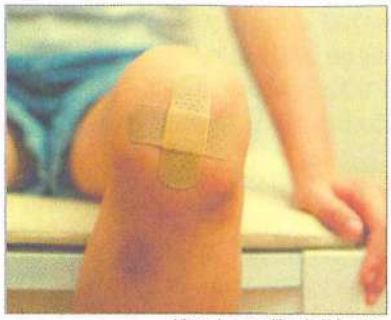
- Lacerations are wounds with ragged edges, with the potential for deeper skin damage and bruising under the skin. A cut is different than a laceration because the edges are more uniform or regular.
- Abrasions (e.g., a skinned knee) are minor injuries to the top layer of skin.
- If the wound is not deep, gentle daily washing with mild soap and water and keeping the wound covered (e.g., with petroleum jelly, bandage) will allow closure over time. However, if bleeding does not stop after cleaning, or the wound extends far below the surface layers of the skin, seek medical attention; it may require stitches to close the wound.
- Tissue adhesives (e.g., *Band-Aid Liquid Bandage, Nexcare Skin Crack Care,* others) create a polymer layer, which binds to the skin; this keeps the wound clean and protected from moisture. Some contain topical analgesics.
- *Wound Seal* is a topical powder used over a bleeding wound to quickly form a scab and reduce the risk of infection.
- Wounds without signs of an infection (e.g., pus) generally do not require antibiotic ointment.

BITES

- Animal and human bites are associated with a high risk of infection; these should always be evaluated by a healthcare provider.
- Bites from certain spiders in the U.S. can be deadly, such as the brown recluse, black widow and hobo spiders. See the Toxicology & Antidotes chapter.
- Spiders tend to stay hidden and are not aggressive; bites can usually be avoided by inspecting and shaking out clothing or equipment prior to use and wearing protective clothing. If bitten, identify the type of spider if possible, wash with soap and cold water, apply a cold compress, elevate the extremity and get emergency medical care.
- Minor, harmless insect bites can be treated with a topical steroid or oral antihistamine (such as diphenhydramine) to reduce itching.

BURNS

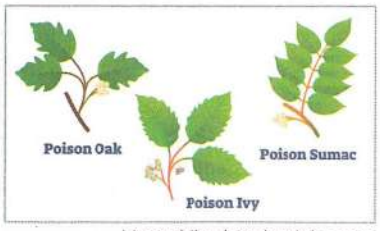
- Burns can be characterized as:
  - First degree (red/painful, minor swelling)
  - Second degree (thicker, blisters, very painful)
  - Third degree (damage to all layers of skin, appears white or charred)
- Burns from chemical exposure or patients who are immunosuppressed should be referred for emergency medical care.
- If the burn is first or second degree, OTC treatment is acceptable if the area is less than two inches in diameter and not located on the face, over a major joint or on the feet or genitals. In diabetes, even a mild foot burn could lead to amputation.
- Minor burns should be treated first by running the burn under cool water or soaking in cool water for 5 – 20 minutes.
- Do not apply ice as it can further damage injured skin. Bandages should be applied if the skin is broken, or if blisters pop.
- Burned skin itches as it heals. Skin that has been burned is more sensitive to the sun for up to a year.
- Apply ointment to minor burns to protect the skin, retain moisture and reduce scarring.
- Silver sulfadiazine *(Silvadene; SSD)* can be used topically to reduce infection risk and promote healing. If the skin is broken, systemic toxicity could occur. Do not use with sulfa allergy or G6PD deficiency (due to hemolysis risk).

DRUGS	NOTES	SAFETY/COUNSELING
OTC **Polymyxin/bacitracin/neomycin *(Neosporin Original,* others)** is an antibiotic ointment For neomycin allergy, use *Polysporin* (bacitracin/polymyxin) or bacitracin alone **Rx** **Mupirocin** is an antibiotic ointment or cream Covers staph (including MRSA) and strep **Bacitracin/neomycin/polymyxin B/ hydrocortisone *(Cortisporin*)*** is an antibiotic ointment Collagenase *(Santyl)* is a debriding ointment for chronic wounds	 iStock.com/DmitriMaruta Burns require a moist (but not wet) environment for healing. Apply either an ointment or a bandage designed for burns.	**Application of topical antibiotics** Clean the affected area and apply a small amount of medication (an amount equal to the surface area of the tip of a finger) to the affected area 1-3 times daily. If the area can get dirty (such as a hand) or be irritated by clothing, cover with an adhesive bandage (e.g., *Band-Aid)* or with sterile gauze and adhesive tape; change dressing daily. If not in an area that will get dirty or be rubbed by clothing, a wound does not need to be covered. Leaving a wound uncovered helps it stay dry and heal.

**Brand discontinued but name still used in practice.*

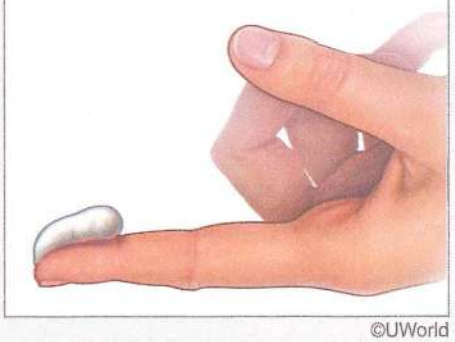
POISON IVY, OAK AND SUMAC

- Poison ivy, oak or sumac poisoning is an allergic reaction that results from touching the sap of these plants, which contain the toxin urushiol.
- See the image below for the appearance of each of the leaves. Poison oak and ivy are known for leaves in clusters of three.
- The sap may be on the plant, in ashes of burned plants, on an animal or other objects that came in contact with the plant (e.g., clothing, garden tools).
- Small amounts of urushiol can remain under fingernails for days unless removed with good cleaning.

DRUGS	NOTES	SAFETY/COUNSELING
OTC Aluminum acetate solution *(Boro-Packs, Domeboro Soothing Soak)* Colloidal oatmeal *(Aveeno)* Calamine lotion/pramoxine (anesthetic) *(Caladryl, IvaRest)* *Zanfel* binds to and removes urushiol from the skin when the product is applied and washed off – low evidence for efficacy	 VectorMine/stock.adobe.com *"Leaves of three, let it be."*	Aluminum acetate is an astringent (drying agent). Wash the urushiol off with soap and water carefully, including under fingernails and on clothing. Topical or oral steroids will help (oral needed in severe rash). Cold compresses can help.

INFLAMMATION AND RASH

- The primary treatment for skin irritation is topical steroids. Two strengths of hydrocortisone (HC) are available OTC, 0.5% and 1%; all other topical steroids are prescription only.
- The steroid vehicle influences the strength of the medication. Usual potency, from highest to lowest: ointment > cream > lotion > solution > gel > spray.
- Thin skin on the face, eyelids and genitals is highly susceptible to topical steroid side effects; low potency steroids should be used on these areas and skin folds (e.g., armpits, groin, under the breasts) where the absorption is higher.
- Local (skin) steroid side effects, if used long-term, include skin thinning, pigment changes (lighter or darker), telangiectasia (i.e., spider veins or small blood vessels visible through the skin), rosacea, perioral dermatitis and acne, risk of skin infections, delayed wound healing, irritation/burning/peeling and contact dermatitis.
- Antihistamines that block the histamine-1 receptor are used for urticaria (hives). The less sedating second-generation antihistamines (e.g., loratadine, cetirizine) are preferred over first-generation antihistamines (e.g., hydroxyzine, diphenhydramine) due to better tolerability. To prevent day time drowsiness, first-generation antihistamines can be given at bedtime. See the Allergic Rhinitis, Cough & Cold chapter.
- Histamine-2 receptor antagonists (e.g., famotidine) are helpful in some patients with urticaria/hives.

DRUGS	NOTES	SAFETY/COUNSELING
OTC Lowest potency: **Hydrocortisone** 0.5% (infants) and 1% for mild conditions, thin skin (groin area, elderly) and children HC 1% lotion *(Aquanil HC)* **Rx** Higher potency: see chart on the next page	Common topical steroids, ranked by potency, are included in the table on the following page. Use ointments for thick or dry skin. Ointments have low water content (reduced absorption) and form a skin barrier. See the Nonsterile Compounding chapter. Lotions, gels and foams spread more easily on hairy skin. No evidence for use of topical diphenhydramine, can use systemic but caution due to side effects. Skin should be lubricated (hydrated) with moisturizers for most conditions. Camphor, menthol, local anesthetics (often in combo creams with HC) can help relieve itching. Severe rash will likely require oral steroids for 1-2 weeks.	**Fingertip unit**  ©UWorld The "fingertip" unit is used to estimate amount: from the fingertip to the 1st joint provides enough medication to cover one adult hand (about ½ g). Encourage patient not to use more than directed as overuse has risks (see above). Do not apply for longer than 2 weeks. Apply high-potency steroids once daily. Apply OTC/lower potency steroids 1-2× daily. It is common to use a higher potency product, followed by a lower potency product, to treat acute inflammation.
Hydroxyzine *(Vistaril)*	For urticaria (hives) with severe itching. 25 mg PO TID-QID	Anticholinergic side effects, primarily sedation and dry mouth.

POTENCIES OF TOPICAL STEROIDS

Very High Potency
Clobetasol propionate 0.05% Lotion/Shampoo/Spray *(Clobex)*, Cream/Ointment *(Temovate*)*, **Foam *(Olux*)***, Gel
Fluocinonide 0.1% Cream *(Vanos)*
Betamethasone dipropionate 0.05% Ointment *(Diprolene)*, Gel/Lotion
Halobetasol propionate 0.05% Lotion *(Ultravate*)*, Cream/Ointment
Diflorasone diacetate 0.05% Ointment
High Potency
Betamethasone dipropionate 0.05% Cream
Fluocinonide 0.05% Ointment
Mometasone furoate 0.1% Ointment
Desoximetasone 0.05% Gel *(Topicort)*, 0.25% Cream *(Topicort)*
Diflorasone diacetate 0.05% Cream
Halcinonide 0.1% Cream *(Halog)*
High-Medium Potency
Fluocinonide 0.05% Cream
Betamethasone valerate 0.12% Foam *(Luxiq*)*
Desoximetasone 0.05% Cream *(Topicort)*
Fluticasone propionate 0.005% Ointment
Medium Potency
Mometasone furoate 0.1% Lotion
Triamcinolone acetonide 0.1% Cream *(Triderm)*, 0.147 mg/g **Spray *(Kenalog*)***
Fluocinolone acetonide 0.025% Cream/Ointment *(Synalar)*
Flurandrenolide 0.05% Ointment *(Cordran*)*
Lower Potency
Desonide 0.05% Gel
Fluocinolone acetonide 0.01% Shampoo *(Capex*)*, 0.01% Cream
Flurandrenolide 0.05% Cream, Lotion/Tape *(Cordran*)*
Fluticasone propionate 0.05% Cream/Lotion
Hydrocortisone butyrate 0.1% Cream/Lotion/Ointment/Solution *(Locoid)*
Hydrocortisone probutate 0.1% Cream *(Pandel*)*
Prednicarbate 0.1% Cream
Mild Potency
Alclometasone dipropionate 0.05% Cream/Ointment
Desonide 0.05% Cream/Lotion/Foam
Fluocinolone acetonide 0.01% Oil *(Derma-Smoothe/FS)*, Solution *(Synalar)*, Cream
Lowest Potency
Hydrocortisone Cream: 0.5%, **1% *(Cortizone-10)***, 2.5% *(MiCort-HC)*; Lotion: 1%/2%; Ointment: 0.5%/1%/2.5%

**Brand discontinued but still used in practice.*

SUNSCREENS AND SUN PROTECTION

- Applying sunscreen decreases the risk of sun damage and skin cancer. Keep in mind that sunscreen blocks vitamin D production in the skin, and many Americans are vitamin D deficient.
- It is advisable to stay out of the sun when it is strongest (between 10AM – 4PM). The damaging ultraviolet (UV) rays penetrate clouds; this applies to overcast days as well. Another way to avoid sun exposure is to wear protective clothing.
- Sunscreen that provides UVA (A for aging – causes damage below the skin surface) and UVB (B for burning) protection should be applied to exposed skin. Both UVA and UVB contribute to skin cancer. A "broad-spectrum" sunscreen should be chosen that protects against both UVA and UVB.
- SPF stands for sun protection factor, which is a measure of how well UVB rays are deflected.
- Some dermatologists and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommend a minimum of SPF 15 and others like the American Academy of Dermatology (AAD) recommend a minimum of SPF 30. Sunscreen should be applied liberally at least every two hours and reapplied after swimming or sweating. The AAP recommends keeping babies less than 6 months old out of the sun.

TIME TO BURN (TTB)

TTB (with sunscreen in min) = SPF × TTB (without sunscreen)

- How SPF works: if someone would normally burn in 10 minutes, an SPF of 5 would extend the time they would burn to 50 minutes (5 × 10 = 50). Regardless of the SPF and calculated TTB, sunscreens only provide skin protection for a couple of hours and need to be reapplied frequently.
- Sunscreen labeling is not permitted to use "waterproof" or "sweatproof" since they all wash off, at least partially, in water. A sunscreen can claim to be "water-resistant," but only for 40 – 80 minutes. Reapply after swimming or sweating.
- The AAD recommends chemical sunscreens with any of the following ingredients: oxybenzone, avobenzone, octisalate, octocrylene, homosalate or octinoxate.
  - ☐ Oxybenzone can be irritating to the skin (uncommon).
- Physical sunscreens may be used as an alternative to chemical sunscreens. Zinc oxide and titanium dioxide are physical sunscreens recommended by the AAD.
- Products claiming to be oral sunscreens are not effective substitutes for topical sunscreen and should not be recommended.

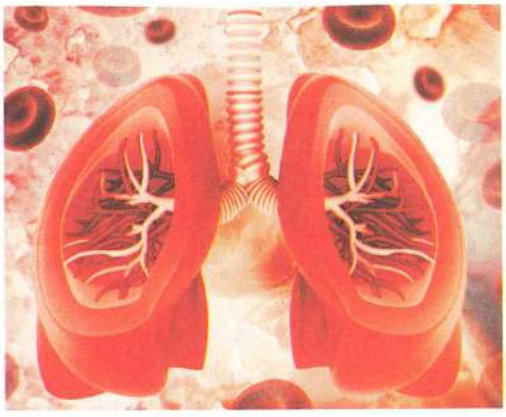
Select Guidelines/References

Guidelines of care for the management of acne vulgaris. J Am Acad Dermatol. 2024 May;90(5):1006.e1-1006.e30.

Sidbury R, Alikhan A, Bercovitch L, et al. Guidelines of care for the management of atopic dermatitis in adults with topical therapies. *J Am Acad Derm* 2023; S0190-9622.

Nolt D, Moore S, Yan AC, et al. Committee on Infectious Diseases, Committee on Practice and Ambulatory Medicine, Section on Dermatology. Head Lice. *Pediatrics* 2022; 150(4):e2022059282.

PULMONARY CONDITIONS & TOBACCO CESSATION



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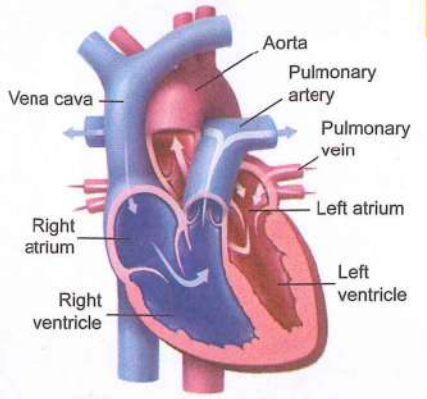
Four-chambered heart



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CHAPTER 40

PULMONARY ARTERIAL HYPERTENSION

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= Key Drugs Guy

BACKGROUND

Pulmonary hypertension (PH) is characterized by continuous high blood pressure in the pulmonary arteries. A normal pulmonary artery pressure (PAP) ranges from 8 – 20 mmHg when resting. PH is defined as a mean PAP (mPAP) ≥ 25 mmHg in the setting of normal fluid status.

CLASSIFICATION

PH may occur secondary to various disease states. The World Health Organization (WHO) classifies PH into five groups (see box below). The focus of this chapter is Group 1, pulmonary arterial hypertension (PAH). When there is no identifiable cause, it is called primary, or idiopathic, PAH. Secondary causes include genetic inheritance, connective tissue diseases, advanced liver disease, HIV infection, or medications (see the Key Drugs Guy below).

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (WHO) CLINICAL CLASSIFICATION OF PULMONARY HYPERTENSION

Group 1: pulmonary arterial hypertension (PAH) - includes idiopathic, heritable, drug- and toxin-induced, disease-associated (e.g., connective tissue diseases, HIV infection, portal hypertension) and persistent pulmonary hypertension of a newborn

Group 2: PH due to left heart disease

Group 3: PH due to lung diseases and/or hypoxia

Group 4: chronic thromboembolic pulmonary hypertension (CTEPH)

Group 5: PH with unclear/multifactorial mechanisms

SELECT DRUGS THAT CAN CAUSE PAH

Cocaine

Fenfluramine

Methamphetamine/amphetamine

SSRI use during pregnancy [↑ risk of persistent pulmonary hypertension of a newborn (PPHN)]

Weight-loss drugs (diethylpropion, phentermine, phendimetrazine)

PATHOPHYSIOLOGY

PAH stems from increased vasoconstrictor substances [e.g., endothelin-1, thromboxane A2 (TXA2)], and decreased vasodilators (e.g., prostacyclins). Vasoconstriction results in reduced blood flow and high pressure within the pulmonary vasculature. In addition, there is more cell proliferation than apoptosis (cell death) in pulmonary artery walls which causes them to thicken and form scar tissue (vasoproliferation).

As the walls thicken and scar, the arteries become increasingly narrower. This makes it difficult for the right ventricle to pump blood through the pulmonary arteries due to the increased pressure. As a result of working harder, the right ventricle enlarges, and right heart failure develops. Heart failure is the most common cause of death in patients with PAH.

Symptoms of PAH include fatigue, dyspnea, chest pain, syncope, edema, tachycardia and/or Raynaud's phenomenon. In Raynaud's, reduced blood supply causes discoloration and coldness in the fingers, toes and occasionally other areas.

There is no cure for PAH, but drug therapy can reduce symptoms and improve exercise tolerance. Without treatment, life expectancy is three years. In some cases, a lung or heart-lung transplant is an option.

NON-DRUG TREATMENT

Treatment of PH groups 2 – 5 is aimed at the underlying causes (e.g., anticoagulation for chronic thromboembolic PH). Patients with PAH should follow a sodium-restricted diet of < 2.4 grams/day to help manage volume status, especially if they have right ventricular failure. Medications that increase sodium and water retention (e.g., NSAIDs) should be avoided. Routine influenza and pneumococcal vaccines are advised. Exposure to high altitudes can contribute to hypoxic pulmonary vasoconstriction and may not be tolerated. Oxygen is used when needed to maintain oxygen saturation > 90%.

DRUG TREATMENT

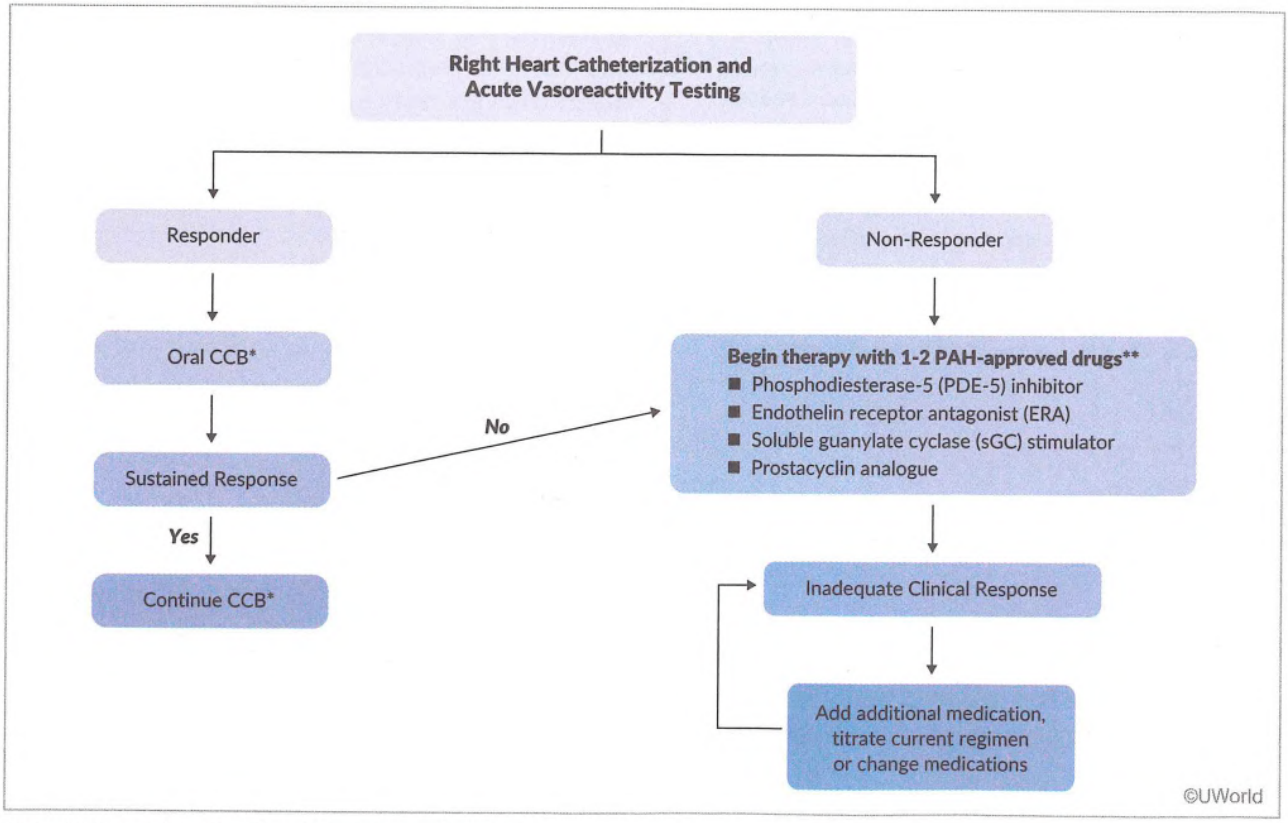
A right heart catheterization is performed to confirm the diagnosis of PAH. During the right heart catheterization, short-acting vasodilators (e.g., inhaled nitric oxide, IV epoprostenol, IV adenosine) are administered for vasoreactivity testing. The response to acute vasoreactivity testing determines which vasodilator medications should be used (see the PAH Treatment Algorithm below).

If testing results in the mPAP falling by at least 10 mmHg to a value less than 40 mmHg, the patient is considered a responder and should be initially treated with an oral calcium channel blocker (CCB), though only half of patients will have a sustained response. The CCBs used most frequently are long-acting nifedipine, diltiazem and amlodipine. The use of verapamil is not recommended due to its more pronounced negative inotropic effects relative to diltiazem.

Non-responders to vasoreactivity testing and those who fail CCB therapy are treated with more potent vasodilating drugs. These include prostacyclin analogues and receptor agonists, endothelin receptor antagonists (ERAs), phosphodiesterase-5 (PDE-5) inhibitors, a soluble guanylate cyclase (sGC) stimulator and/or sotatercept *(Winrevair)*. Parenteral prostacyclin analogues, specifically IV epoprostenol, can decrease mortality.

Supportive therapies for PAH include loop diuretics (for volume overload) and digoxin (to improve cardiac output or control heart rate in atrial fibrillation). Biochemical changes (e.g., ↑ TXA2, ↓ prostacyclin) lead to a pro-thrombotic state. The need for anticoagulation patient-specific; if used, warfarin is preferred and titrated to an individualized INR goal (e.g., 1.5 – 2.5, 2 – 3) based on thromboembolic risk and comorbid conditions (e.g., atrial fibrillation). Referral to a PAH specialty center is important to assess the feasibility of transplantation.

PAH TREATMENT ALGORITHM



*Usually long-acting nifedipine, diltiazem or amlodipine.

**When selecting medications, consider disease severity and patient-specific factors (e.g., drug interactions, compliance, suitability for home IV therapy). For World Health Organization Functional Classification (WHO-FC) Class IV (i.e., unable to be physically active and with signs of right heart failure, which may be present at rest), first-line treatment is an IV prostacyclin analogue.

PROSTACYCLIN ANALOGUES (OR PROSTANOIDS) AND RECEPTOR AGONISTS

Prostacyclin synthase is reduced in PAH, causing decreased production of prostacyclin I2 (a vasodilator with anti-proliferative effects) in pulmonary artery smooth muscle cells. Prostacyclin analogues (prostanoids) are potent vasodilators (of both pulmonary and systemic vascular beds) and inhibitors of platelet aggregation. Epoprostenol and treprostinil can be administered by continuous infusion at home using an ambulatory infusion pump. Selexipag is a prostacyclin receptor agonist with a similar mechanism of action.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Epoprostenol *(Flolan, Veletri)* AKA prostacyclin Continuous IV infusion via central venous catheter	Start at 2 ng/kg/min; ↑ by 1-2 ng/kg/min in 15 minute intervals based on clinical response; usual dose is 25-40 ng/kg/min	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Epoprostenol: heart failure with ↓ left ventricular ejection fraction Treprostinil (oral): severe hepatic impairment (Child-Pugh Class C) **WARNINGS** Vasodilation reactions (hypotension, flushing, headache, dizziness) Rebound PH (with interruption or large ↓ in dose), which can be fatal Increased risk of bleeding Chronic IV infusions: sepsis and bloodstream infections (use sterile technique when preparing parenteral drug and educate patients about infusion site care) Treprostinil *(Orenitram)*: oral tablet shell does not dissolve (ghost tablet) and can lodge in a diverticulum **SIDE EFFECTS** Hypotension, flushing, jaw pain, headache, dizziness, N/V/D, edema, musculoskeletal pain (e.g., myalgia), tachycardia, flu-like syndrome, anxiety, tremor, thrombocytopenia IV/SC infusions: infusion-site pain, especially SC *Remodulin* (~85%) Treprostinil (inhaled) and iloprost: cough and mouth/throat irritation **NOTES** Parenteral drugs *(Flolan, Veletri, Remodulin)* are very potent vasodilators; avoid interruptions and sudden, large dose reductions Due to the short half-lives of epoprostenol (~6 minutes) and parenteral treprostinil (~4 hours), immediate access to a backup pump, infusion sets and medication is essential Epoprostenol: protect from light in storage and during infusion Reconstituted solutions of *Flolan* require use of ice packs for stability; *Veletri* and *Remodulin* are thermostable (no need for ice packs)
Treprostinil *Remodulin:* continuous SC or IV (central venous catheter) infusion *Tyvaso:* inhalation solution and dry powder inhaler (DPI) *Orenitram:* oral, ER tablet	*Remodulin:* start at 1.25 ng/kg/min; ↑ at weekly intervals, up to usual dose of 40-80 ng/kg/min *Tyvaso:* start with 16 mcg (DPI) or 18 mcg (solution) 4 times/day while awake; ↑ every 1-2 weeks to target dose of 48-64 mcg per session (DPI) or 54 mcg per session (solution) *Orenitram:* start with 0.25 mg BID or 0.125 mg TID; ↑ every 3-4 days to the maximum tolerated dose; take with food	
Iloprost *(Ventavis)* Inhalation	2.5-5 mcg/inhalation given 6-9 times/day, no more than once every 2 hours	
Selexipag *(Uptravi)* Tablet, IV infusion	Start with 200 mcg BID; ↑ at weekly intervals to maximum dose of 1600 mcg BID	

PROSTACYCLIN ANALOGUE AND RECEPTOR AGONIST DRUG INTERACTIONS

- The effects of antihypertensive, antiplatelet and anticoagulant drugs can be increased.
- Treprostinil levels are increased by CYP450 2C8 inhibitors (e.g., gemfibrozil) and decreased by CYP2C8 inducers (e.g., rifampin). Strong CYP2C8 inhibitors should be avoided with selexipag.

CASE SCENARIO

AM is a 42-year-old female (weight 85 kg) in the ICU with pulmonary arterial hypertension. At home she mixes 9.5 mL of 1 mg/mL treprostinil with 40.5 mL of sterile water. She sets her pump to 0.06 mL/hr.

■ **What is her dose in ng/kg/min? Round to the nearest tenth.**

Step 1: determine how many milligrams of treprostinil are mixed with sterile water.

$$9.5\ \text{mL} \times \frac{1\ \text{mg}}{\text{mL}} = 9.5\ \text{mg}$$

Step 2: calculate the concentration by dividing the milligrams of treprostinil by the total volume (drug plus diluent).

$$\frac{9.5\ \text{mg}}{(40.5\ \text{mL} + 9.5\ \text{mL})} = 0.19\ \text{mg/mL}$$

Step 3: calculate the dose in ng/kg/min using dimensional analysis.

$$\frac{\left[\frac{0.06\ \text{ml}}{\text{hr}} \times \frac{1\ \text{hr}}{60\ \text{min}} \times \frac{0.19\ \text{mg}}{\text{mL}} \times \frac{1{,}000{,}000\ \text{ng}}{1\ \text{mg}}\right]}{85\ \text{kg}} = 2.2\ \text{ng/kg/min}$$

■ **The pharmacy has treprostinil 2.5 mg/mL in stock. How many milliliters of the pharmacy stock supply should be used to prepare the same treprostinil concentration AM uses at home?**

$$9.5\ \text{mg} \times \frac{\text{mL}}{2.5\ \text{mg}} = 3.8\ \text{mL treprostinil}$$

ENDOTHELIN RECEPTOR ANTAGONISTS

Endothelin is a vasoconstrictor with cellular proliferative effects. ERAs block endothelin receptors on pulmonary artery smooth muscle cells.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Bosentan *(Tracleer)* Tablet	< 40 kg: 62.5 mg BID ≥ 40 kg: 62.5 mg BID (for 4 weeks), then 125 mg BID	**BOXED WARNINGS** Teratogenic (females of childbearing potential must have a negative pregnancy test prior to initiation of therapy and monthly thereafter) Bosentan: hepatotoxicity (↑ ALT/AST and liver failure) Available only through individual REMS programs (Bosentan REMS Program, Ambrisentan REMS Program and *Opsumit* REMS Program); prescribers, pharmacies and patients must enroll (only female patients required to be enrolled in the Ambrisentan and *Opsumit* REMS programs) **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Pregnancy Bosentan: use with cyclosporine or glyburide Ambrisentan: idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis **WARNINGS** Hepatotoxicity, ↓ Hgb/Hct, fluid retention (e.g., pulmonary edema, peripheral edema), ↓ sperm count Bosentan: hypersensitivity reactions (e.g., rash, angioedema, anaphylaxis, DRESS) **SIDE EFFECTS** Headache, upper respiratory tract infections, flushing, hypotension **MONITORING** LFTs, bilirubin, Hgb/Hct, pregnancy tests
Ambrisentan *(Letairis)* Tablet	5 mg daily, may ↑ to 10 mg daily after 4 weeks if tolerated	
Macitentan *(Opsumit)* Tablet + tadalafil *(Opsynvi)*	10 mg daily	

ENDOTHELIN RECEPTOR ANTAGONIST DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Bosentan is a substrate and inducer of CYP3A4 and 2C9. Levels of bosentan can increase with CYP2C9 (e.g., amiodarone, fluconazole) and CYP3A4 (e.g., ritonavir) inhibitors. Concurrent use of cyclosporine or glyburide is contraindicated. Bosentan can decrease the effectiveness of hormonal contraceptives (at least one barrier method of contraception is recommended).
- Ambrisentan is a substrate of CYP3A4 (major), CYP2C19 (minor) and P-gp. Cyclosporine can increase the serum concentration of ambrisentan; limit the dose of ambrisentan to 5 mg daily when given with cyclosporine.
- Macitentan is a substrate of CYP3A4 (major) and CYP2C19 (minor). Strong CYP3A4 inhibitors and inducers should be avoided with macitentan.

PHOSPHODIESTERASE-5 INHIBITORS

PDE-5 degrades cyclic guanosine monophosphate (cGMP). Increased cGMP concentrations lead to pulmonary vasculature relaxation and vasodilation.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Sildenafil ***(Revatio, Liqrev*)*** Tablet, oral suspension, injection ***Viagra*** – erectile dysfunction	IV: 10 mg TID Oral: 20 mg TID, taken 4-6 hours apart	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Avoid use with nitrates or riociguat Revatio: avoid with protease inhibitors (e.g., atazanavir, ritonavir) **WARNINGS** Hearing loss (with or without tinnitus and dizziness), vision loss [rare but may be due to nonarteritic anterior ischemic optic neuropathy (NAION)], hypotension, priapism (seek emergency medical care if erection lasts > 4 hours), pulmonary edema **SIDE EFFECTS** Headache, epistaxis, flushing, dyspepsia, extremity or back pain, N/D
Tadalafil ***(Adcirca, Alyq, Tadliq)*** Tablet, oral suspension + macitentan *(Opsynvi)* ***Cialis*** – erectile dysfunction, BPH	40 mg daily 20 mg daily if mild-moderate renal or hepatic impairment CrCl < 30 mL/min or severe hepatic impairment: avoid use	

**Brand discontinued but name still used in practice.*

PDE-5 INHIBITOR DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Do not give with other PDE-5 inhibitors used for erectile dysfunction.
- Do not use with nitrate medications (see Stable Angina chapter) or riociguat as the potential for excessively low blood pressure is increased. Taking nitrates is an absolute contraindication to the use of PDE-5 inhibitors.
- Use caution with concurrent use of alpha-1 blockers or other antihypertensives as PDE-5 inhibitors can increase the risk of hypotension. When tadalafil is used for PAH, alpha 1-blockers are not recommended for comorbid BPH. Alcohol can enhance hypotension with PDE-5 inhibitors.
- PDE-5 inhibitors are major substrates of CYP3A4; avoid use of strong CYP3A4 inhibitors and inducers.

SOLUBLE GUANYLATE CYCLASE STIMULATOR

Soluble guanylate cyclase (sGC) is a receptor for endogenous nitric oxide. Riociguat sensitizes sGC to nitric oxide and directly stimulates the receptor at a different binding site. This increases cGMP, leading to relaxation and antiproliferative effects in pulmonary arteries. Riociguat is approved for use in both PAH and CTEPH.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Riociguat *(Adempas)* Tablet	Start with 0.5-1 mg TID, increase by 0.5 mg TID every 2 weeks if SBP > 95 mmHg; max dose is 2.5 mg TID	**BOXED WARNINGS** Teratogenic (females of childbearing potential must have a negative pregnancy test prior to initiation of therapy and monthly thereafter) Available only through the Adempas REMS Program; prescribers, pharmacies and female patients must enroll **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Pregnancy, use of PDE-5 inhibitors or nitrates **WARNINGS** Hypotension, bleeding, pulmonary edema **SIDE EFFECTS** Headache, dyspepsia, dizziness, N/V/D

RIOCIGUAT DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Do not use with nitrate medications (see Stable Angina chapter) or PDE-5 inhibitors as the potential for excessively low blood pressure is increased. Riociguat should not be administered within 24 hours of sildenafil, or within 24 hours before or 48 hours after tadalafil.
- Smoking increases riociguat clearance; the dose may need to be decreased with smoking cessation.
- Separate from antacids by > 1 hour.
- Riociguat is a major substrate of CYP3A4, CYP2C8 and P-gp.

PULMONARY FIBROSIS

Pulmonary fibrosis (PF) is scarred and damaged lung tissue. The common presentation is exertional dyspnea with a nonproductive cough. There are various causes of PF, including toxin exposure (e.g., asbestos, silica), medical conditions and drugs (see Key Drugs Guy). If the contributing factor is not identified, the PF is called idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF).

If the condition is drug-induced, the offending drug should be discontinued. In addition to chronic oxygen supplementation, pirfenidone *(Esbriet)* and nintedanib *(Ofev)* slow the rate of decline in lung function. Several of the drugs approved for PAH (particularly sildenafil) can be used off-label for IPF.

SELECT DRUGS THAT CAN CAUSE PULMONARY FIBROSIS

KEY DRUGS

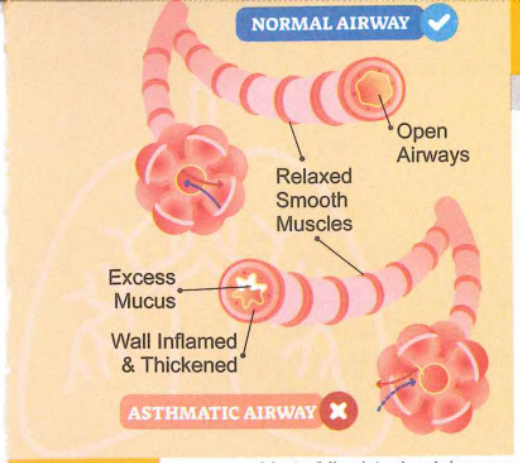
Amiodarone, dronedarone
Bleomycin
Busulfan
Carmustine

Others:
Nitrofurantoin
Sulfasalazine

Select Guidelines/References

Therapy for pulmonary arterial hypertension in adults. Chest. 2019;155:565-586.

2015 ESC/ERS guidelines for the diagnosis and treatment of pulmonary hypertension. Eur Heart J. 2016;37:67-119.



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CHAPTER 41

ASTHMA

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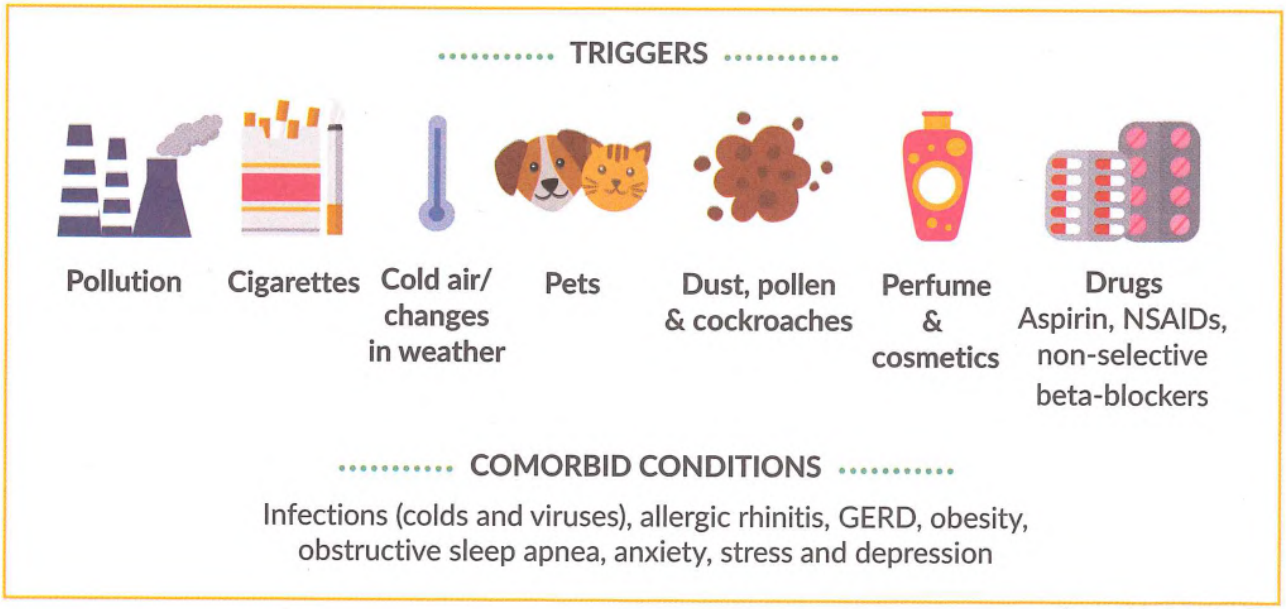
BACKGROUND

Asthma is a disease that affects the airways (bronchi) of the lungs. It is a common chronic disease among children. Asthma is characterized by chronic airway inflammation and bronchoconstriction (narrowed airways) that cause airflow obstruction, which results in expiratory airflow limitation (difficulty with exhalation). This results in recurrent episodes of wheezing, breathlessness, chest tightness and coughing, which are classic symptoms of asthma. The symptoms can vary over time and in intensity, often occurring more frequently at night or on awakening. They can also be worsened by exposure to triggers (see next section).

The inflammation and bronchoconstriction in asthma are reversible with medication (and sometimes spontaneously). The most common complication is exacerbations, also called asthma attacks, which can range from mild to severe, and in some cases, can be fatal. There is no cure for asthma, but it can be controlled.

ENVIRONMENTAL TRIGGERS AND COMORBID CONDITIONS

The triggers that cause an asthma attack vary; some people will have bronchoconstriction from a pet, and others will not. Patients need to learn their personal triggers and avoid them when possible. If the trigger cannot be avoided, acute treatment may be needed. Some of the most common triggers are listed below, including comorbid conditions.



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DIAGNOSIS AND ASSESSMENT

There are many types of asthma. When classic symptoms are present, a detailed history and physical examination can help define the type, along with triggers, environmental factors and comorbid conditions that can contribute to disease severity. Most types of asthma result from the activation of inflammatory mediators (e.g., histamine, leukotrienes, cytokines) and an increase in inflammatory cells (e.g., mast cells, eosinophils) that contribute to the disease process. Some patients have a genetic predisposition for severe allergic asthma, which is mediated by immunoglobulin E (IgE), or severe eosinophilic asthma. Both can require specialized treatments in addition to the use of routine inhaled medications.

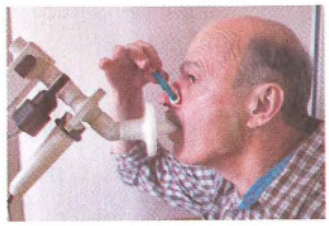
An asthma diagnosis is confirmed with spirometry, which is performed in a medical facility. Spirometry assesses how well the lungs work with various pulmonary function tests, including:

- Forced expiratory volume in 1 second (FEV1): how much air can be forcefully exhaled in one second
- Forced vital capacity (FVC): the maximum volume of air exhaled after taking a deep breath
- FEV1/FVC: the percentage of total air capacity ("vital capacity") that can be forcefully exhaled in one second (the speed of the exhale)

To diagnose asthma, pulmonary function tests should be measured at baseline and after use of a short-acting bronchodilator (e.g., albuterol) to test for reversibility. The Study Tip Gal below describes the diagnostic criteria.

ASTHMA DIAGNOSTIC CRITERIA

Measure baseline FEV1 with spirometry → Give albuterol → Measure post-bronchodilator FEV1



An FEV1 increase > 12% post-bronchodilator is consistent with asthma diagnosis (considered "reversible")

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Other tests that may be involved in diagnosing asthma include fractional exhaled nitric oxide (FeNO) and the peak expiratory flow rate (PEFR). FeNO measures nitric oxide in exhaled breath and can indicate the level of airway inflammation. PEFR is measured using a peak flow meter and is typically used for monitoring control as part of the asthma action plan, but it can be used at initial diagnosis. PEFR and peak flow meters are described in more detail later in the chapter.

TREATMENT PRINCIPLES

Long-term asthma management should focus on reducing impairment (e.g., symptoms, frequency of rescue inhaler use, limitations to normal activity) and risks (e.g., exacerbations, hospitalizations, medication adverse events). Initiating, monitoring and adjusting treatment follows a step-wise and continuous process.

There are two major guidelines used for treating asthma: the Global Initiative for Asthma (GINA) and the NHLBI's Expert Panel Report. The GINA guidelines are considered the gold standard, as they are published annually; they are "global" guidelines, so are not specific to the United States. The treatment recommendations in this chapter follow the GINA guidelines.

INITIAL ASTHMA ASSESSMENT

The intensity (or step) of initial treatment is primarily based on the frequency of daytime symptoms and nighttime awakenings. The table below describes the clinical assessment for each step. The Asthma Treatment Algorithm discussed later in the chapter provides the corresponding treatment. Asthma severity is then determined based on how well the treatment controlled the patient's symptoms.

Symptoms	Clinical Assessment and Treatment Intensity (or Step)			
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Steps 4 and 5
Daytime symptoms	< 2×/month	≥ 2×/month but < 4-5 days/week	Most days	Daily
Nighttime awakenings	None	None	≥ 1×/week	≥ 1×/week

GENERAL TREATMENT APPROACH

- Select treatment according to the initial assessment of asthma symptoms (see the table on the previous page and the Asthma Treatment Algorithm later in the chapter).
- Follow up in 2 – 6 weeks. At each visit:
  - ☐ Assess adherence to medications.
  - ☐ Perform medication counseling (confirm correct inhaler technique and understanding of maintenance versus rescue treatment). See instructions on technique, priming and cleaning of select inhalers at the end of the chapter.
  - ☐ Assess control of risk factors, triggers and comorbid conditions.
  - ☐ Review the asthma action plan (see example later in the chapter).
  - ☐ Address patient concerns.
  - ☐ Assess asthma control/severity and step up, maintain or step down treatment. Do not step up therapy until the items above have been addressed; there might be other factors contributing to poor asthma control (e.g., incorrect inhaler technique, lack of adherence) and increasing doses of medications and/or adding other drugs can increase side effects without providing additional benefit.
- Follow up visits can decrease to every 1 – 6 months once control is gained, and to every three months if a step down in treatment is planned.

CONTROLLING RISK FACTORS

Patients with asthma should avoid exposure to tobacco smoke and those who smoke should quit, or be strongly encouraged to quit at each healthcare visit. Physical activity should not be avoided, even in those with exercise-induced bronchospasm.

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Triggers should be identified and avoided, if possible. Some triggers should not be avoided (e.g., laughter) and others are difficult to avoid (e.g., stress, infections). Comorbid conditions should be treated to improve asthma control.

An annual influenza vaccine is recommended in all patients 6 months of age or older, including those with asthma. Pneumococcal and COVID-19 vaccines should be kept up to date; see Immunizations chapter for details.

Any patient with persistent asthma and a clear connection between symptoms and exposure to an allergen should have skin or in vitro testing performed to assess sensitivity. Treatment with subcutaneous allergen immunotherapy should be used, if indicated, based on the test results.

DRUG TREATMENT

Asthma drugs come in oral, inhaled and injectable formulations. Inhaled forms deliver drugs directly into the lungs, have reduced toxicity and are the preferred formulation. Drugs used to treat asthma are classified as relievers (rescue inhalers) or controllers (maintenance drugs). The table below describes the different classes of asthma medications and the primary role or place in treatment for each.

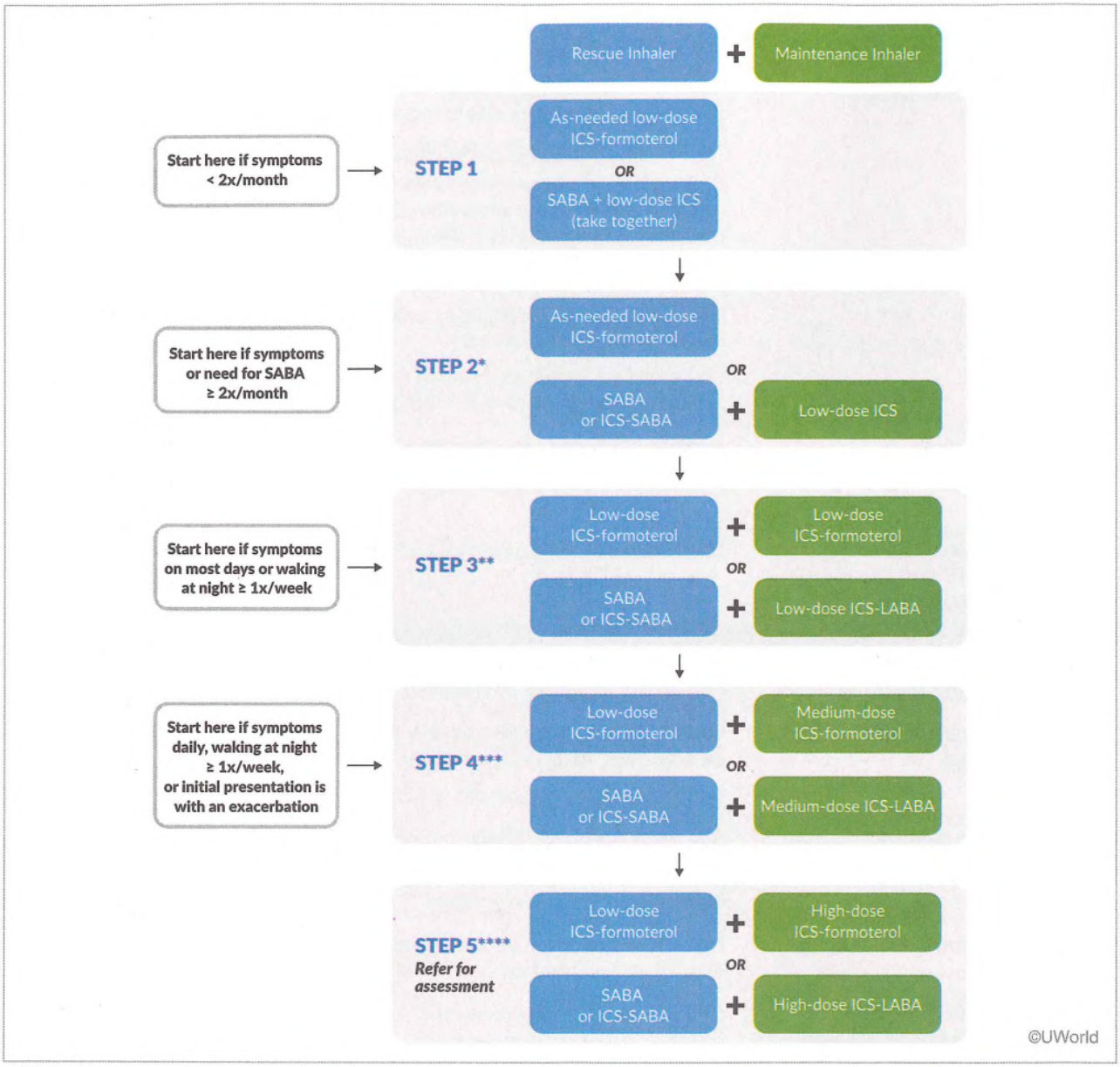
Relievers, or rescue inhalers, rapidly open airways within minutes of inhalation to treat acute symptoms. The preferred reliever regimen is the combination of a low-dose inhaled corticosteroid (ICS) + formoterol. Alternatively, a short-acting beta-2 agonist (SABA) can be used but should be administered at the same time as an ICS. Relievers can also be used to prevent exercise-induced bronchospasm (EIB).

Controllers, or maintenance inhalers, are taken on a daily basis to reduce inflammation and maintain asthma control. ICS are the mainstay of treatment. Doses are categorized as low, medium or high and can be escalated (by increasing the number of inhalations per dose or to a higher strength inhaler), if indicated, based on asthma severity.

ASTHMA MEDICATION CLASS	NOTES
Relievers (Rescue Drugs)	
Low-dose ICS + formoterol (combination inhaler)	Preferred reliever regimen; may be referred to as an anti-inflammatory reliever (AIR) Used intermittently (as needed) for acute asthma symptoms Formoterol is a long-acting beta-2 agonist (LABA) with fast onset; this combination reduces the risk of exacerbations compared to SABA alone
Inhaled short-acting beta-2 agonist (SABA)	Used intermittently (as needed) for acute asthma symptoms (an alternative to the preferred therapy of ICS-formoterol) Quickly reverses bronchoconstriction SABAs do not treat underlying inflammation; they should be used with an ICS (taken as needed at the same time as the SABA, or taken daily as a controller medication). A combined ICS-SABA (another type of AIR) is an alternative option.
Systemic steroids	Injections: used during exacerbations Oral: used during exacerbations or for severe asthma that is difficult to control with other drug combinations Use should be limited as much as possible due to the risk of adverse effects (see the Systemic Steroids & Autoimmune Conditions chapter)
Inhaled epinephrine	Available OTC; can use intermittently for acute treatment of mild asthma only Not included in asthma guidelines
Inhaled short-acting muscarinic antagonists (SAMAs); also called inhaled anticholinergics	Can be used in combination with a SABA during exacerbations
Controllers (Maintenance Drugs)	
Inhaled corticosteroids (ICS)	First-line for all patients with asthma; the most effective anti-inflammatory drugs
Inhaled long-acting beta-2 agonists (LABAs)	Used in combination with ICS (should never be used alone for asthma due to an increased risk of serious adverse outcomes) Preferred add-on medications to ICS
Oral leukotriene receptor antagonists (LTRAs)	Alternative option to LABA in combination with ICS; can also be added to ICS/LABA treatment Most commonly used in children
Theophylline (oral or IV)	Least desirable option for add-on treatment due to significant adverse effects, drug interactions and the need to monitor serum drug concentrations
Inhaled long-acting muscarinic antagonists (LAMAs); also called inhaled anticholinergics	Can be used as add-on treatment in patients with a history of exacerbations despite ICS/LABA treatment
Injectable monoclonal antibodies (SC or IV)	Add-on treatment in persistent severe asthma: Omalizumab: for severe allergic asthma Mepolizumab, reslizumab, benralizumab and dupilumab: for severe eosinophilic asthma Tezepelumab: for severe asthma (regardless of eosinophil counts or biomarkers)

ASTHMA TREATMENT ALGORITHM

The algorithm shows the recommended treatment per the GINA guidelines, with as-needed rescue inhalers shown in blue (left) and maintenance inhalers show in green (right). The preferred regimens are those that use low-dose ICS-formoterol rescue therapy. For steps 3 and higher, ICS-formoterol is used for rescue therapy if the same combination is used for maintenance therapy; this is called maintenance and reliever therapy (MART).



*Alternative treatments: *Step 2: LTRA, or low-dose ICS taken whenever SABA is taken. **Step 3: low-dose ICS + LTRA or medium-dose ICS. ***Step 4: high-dose ICS or add on tiotropium or LTRA. ****Step 5: consider adding tiotropium, oral steroid or injectable treatments.*

ASSESSING ASTHMA CONTROL

Asthma control is assessed using 4 yes/no questions:

- Daytime asthma symptoms > twice/week?
- Any nighttime awakenings due to asthma?
- SABA reliever treatment used > twice/week? (only for patients using SABA therapy.)
- Is activity limited due to asthma?

Well-controlled: no questions answered "yes." Maintain current step (or step down if controlled for ≥ 3 months).

Partly controlled: 1 – 2 questions answered "yes." Step up 1 step.

Uncontrolled: 3 – 4 questions answered "yes." Step up 1 – 2 steps and consider a short course of oral steroids.

BETA-2 AGONISTS

Beta-2 agonists bind to beta-2 receptors, which causes relaxation of bronchial smooth muscle and leads to bronchodilation. SABAs are used as needed (rescue therapy) for acute asthma symptoms. Due to an increased risk of exacerbations, SABAs should only be used with an ICS (either taken as needed, at the same time as the SABA, or daily). They can also be used for other reversible airway diseases (e.g., colds, allergies, bronchitis).

LABAs are used as part of rescue therapy (e.g., ICS + formoterol) or as maintenance therapy beginning in Step 3 of treatment. LABAs should be used only in combination with an ICS. If not already part of the treatment regimen, a LABA should be added to medium-dose ICS before increasing to high-dose ICS, as this leads to more rapid improvement in symptoms and lung function, and a reduction in exacerbations.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Short-Acting Beta-2 Agonists (SABAs)		
Albuterol *(ProAir HFA, ProAir RespiClick, Ventolin HFA, Proventil HFA*, ProAir Digihaler*)*	MDI/DPI: 1-2 inhalations Q4-6H PRN	**WARNINGS** Caution in CVD, glaucoma, hyperthyroidism, seizures, diabetes **SIDE EFFECTS** Nervousness, tremor, tachycardia, palpitations, cough, hyperglycemia, ↓ K **MONITORING** Number of days of SABA use, symptom frequency, peak flow, pulmonary function tests, BP, HR, blood glucose, K **NOTES** MDIs (HFA products): shake well before use Levalbuterol contains the R-isomer of albuterol Epinephrine inhaler: FDA-approved for mild symptoms in intermittent asthma only Most albuterol inhalers contain 200 inhalations/canister; except *Ventolin HFA*, which is available as 200 or 60 inhalations/canister EIB: use 2 inhalations 5 minutes prior to exercise
90 mcg/inh, 0.5% and 0.083% nebulizer solution, oral syrup	Nebulizer: 1.25-5 mg Q4-8H PRN	
+ budesonide *(Airsupra)*	PO forms are available but not recommended	
Levalbuterol *(Xopenex HFA, Xopenex*)*	MDI: 1-2 inhalations Q4-6H PRN	
45 mcg/inh, nebulizer solution	Nebulizer: 0.63-1.25 mg Q6-8H PRN (max TID)	
Epinephrine *(Asthmanefrin Refill)*	Should not be used: non-selective beta agonist	
OTC		
Long-Acting Beta-2 Agonists (LABAs)		
Salmeterol *(Serevent Diskus)* 50 mcg/inh	DPI: 1 inhalation BID	Side effects and monitoring are the same as SABAs plus: **BOXED WARNINGS** ↑ risk of asthma-related deaths; should only be used in asthma patients who are currently receiving but are not adequately controlled on an inhaled corticosteroid ↑ risk of asthma-related hospitalization in children/adolescents **NOTES** Maintenance inhaler only; not for acute bronchospasm

**Brand discontinued but name still used in practice.*

INHALED CORTICOSTEROIDS

Corticosteroids inhibit the inflammatory response. They reduce asthma symptoms, increase lung function, improve quality of life and reduce the risk of exacerbations. They are used as needed in combination with formoterol or a SABA for rescue therapy, and as monotherapy or with a LABA for maintenance treatment.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Beclomethasone *(QVAR RediHaler)* 40, 80 mcg/inh	MDI: 1-4 inhalations BID	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Primary treatment of status asthmaticus or acute episodes of asthma **WARNINGS** High doses for prolonged periods of time can cause adrenal suppression, ↑ risk of fractures, growth retardation (in children) and immunosuppression **SIDE EFFECTS** Dysphonia (difficulty speaking), oral candidiasis (thrush), cough, headache, hoarseness, URTIs, hyperglycemia **MONITORING** Use of SABA/rescue inhaler, symptom frequency, peak flow; growth (children/adolescents), s/sx adrenal insufficiency; s/sx of thrush; bone mineral density **NOTES** Rinse mouth with water and spit out after each use to prevent thrush; can use a spacer device with an MDI to decrease risk *Alvesco:* MDI that does not need to be shaken before use Budesonide: only ICS available as a nebulized solution; used commonly in young children *Pulmicort Respules:* only use with a jet nebulizer connected to an air compressor; do not use an ultrasonic nebulizer *QVAR RediHaler:* breath-activated aerosol with characteristics of a DPI and MDI; do not shake or use with a spacer; does not need priming or activation *ArmonAir* and *AirDuo Digihalers:* contain a built-in electronic module that detects, records and stores data (detects when the inhaler is used and measures inspiratory flow)
Budesonide		
Pulmicort Flexhaler: 90, 180 mcg/inh ***Pulmicort Respules:*** nebulizer suspension	DPI: 1-4 inhalations BID Nebulizer: 0.25-0.5 mg daily or BID in children age 1-8 years	
+ formoterol *(Symbicort, Breyna)* + albuterol *(Airsupra)*		
Fluticasone		
Flovent HFA:* 44, 110, 220 mcg/inh	MDI: 2 inhalations BID	
Flovent Diskus:* 50, 100, 250 mcg/inh	DPI: 1-2 inhalations BID	
Arnuity Ellipta: 100, 200 mcg/inh	DPI: 1-2 inhalations daily	
ArmonAir Digihaler:* 55, 113, 232 mcg/inh	DPI: 1 inhalation BID	
+ salmeterol *(Advair Diskus, Advair HFA,* *AirDuo RespiClick, Wixela Inhub, AirDuo Digihaler*)* **+ vilanterol *(Breo Ellipta)***		
Mometasone		
Asmanex HFA: 100, 200 mcg/inh	MDI: 1-2 inhalations BID	
Asmanex: 110, 220 mcg/inh	DPI: 1-2 inhalations daily	
+ formoterol *(Dulera)*		
Ciclesonide *(Alvesco):* 80, 160 mcg/inh	MDI: 1-2 inhalations BID	

**Brand discontinued but name still used in practice.*

CATEGORIZATION OF INHALED CORTICOSTEROID DAILY DOSES

DRUG	LOW DAILY DOSE	MEDIUM DAILY DOSE	HIGH DAILY DOSE
Beclomethasone MDI	100-200 mcg	> 200-400 mcg	> 400 mcg
Budesonide DPI	200-400 mcg	> 400-800 mcg	> 800 mcg
Ciclesonide MDI	80-160 mcg	> 160-320 mcg	> 320 mcg
Fluticasone MDI or DPI	100-250 mcg	> 250-500 mcg	> 500 mcg
Mometasone MDI	200-400 mcg	200-400 mcg	> 400 mcg
Mometasone DPI	110-220 mcg	> 220-440 mcg	> 440 mcg

CONTROLLER (MAINTENANCE) INHALERS

The table below categorizes the different classes of controller medications for asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). ICS and ICS/LABA combinations are preferred for asthma, whereas LABA, LAMA or LAMA/LABA combinations are preferred for COPD. Some ICS/LABA combinations are approved for COPD and can be used in select patients (see the COPD chapter).

Combination inhalers increase adherence to treatment which improves disease control. Combination ICS/LABA products are considered safer for asthma, as they reduce the risk of using a LABA alone. Because of this, combination ICS/LABA inhalers do not have the boxed warning for asthma-related deaths that single-entity LABAs have. Note that this table does not include short-acting (rescue) medications.

DRUG CLASS	ASTHMA	COPD
ICS	**Beclomethasone *(QVAR RediHaler)*** **Budesonide *(Pulmicort Flexhaler)*** **Fluticasone *(Arnuity Ellipta,* *Flovent HFA, Flovent Diskus, ArmonAir Digihaler)*** Ciclesonide *(Alvesco)* Mometasone *(Asmanex HFA, Asmanex)*	No single ICS product is FDA-approved for COPD
LABA	**Salmeterol *(Serevent Diskus)***	**Salmeterol *(Serevent Diskus)*** Formoterol *(Perforomist* – nebulizer) Arformoterol *(Brovana* – nebulizer) Olodaterol *(Striverdi Respimat)*
LAMA	**Tiotropium *(Spiriva Respimat* only)**	**Tiotropium *(Spiriva HandiHaler, Spiriva Respimat)*** Aclidinium *(Tudorza Pressair)* Revefenacin *(Yupelri* – nebulizer) Umeclidinium *(Incruse Ellipta)*
ICS/LABA	**Budesonide/formoterol *(Symbicort, Breyna)*** **Fluticasone/salmeterol *(Advair Diskus, Advair HFA,* *AirDuo RespiClick, AirDuo Digihaler, Wixela Inhub)*** **Mometasone/formoterol *(Dulera)*** **Fluticasone/vilanterol *(Breo Ellipta)***	**Budesonide/formoterol *(Symbicort, Breyna)*** **Fluticasone/salmeterol *(Advair Diskus,* *Wixela Inhub)*** **Fluticasone/vilanterol *(Breo Ellipta)***
LAMA/LABA	No combination LAMA/LABA products are FDA-approved for asthma	**Tiotropium/olodaterol *(Stiolto Respimat)*** **Umeclidinium/vilanterol *(Anoro Ellipta)*** Aclidinium/formoterol *(Duaklir Pressair)* Glycopyrrolate/formoterol *(Bevespi Aerosphere)*
LAMA/ LABA/ICS	**Umeclidinium/vilanterol/fluticasone *(Trelegy Ellipta)***	**Umeclidinium/vilanterol/fluticasone *(Trelegy Ellipta)*** **Glycopyrrolate/formoterol/budesonide *(Breztri Aerosphere)***

INHALED DELIVERY DEVICES

Inhaler devices come as metered-dose inhalers (MDIs) or dry powder inhalers (DPIs), including breath-actuated DPIs. Recognizing the type of inhaler is important as it impacts the technique the patient needs to use and the education required (see the Patient Self-Management and Education section later in the chapter).

KEY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MDIs AND DPIs

FEATURES	MDIs	DPIs
Brand name identifiers	*HFA, Respimat* or no suffix (e.g., *Symbicort, Dulera)*	*Diskus, Ellipta, Pressair, HandiHaler, RespiClick, Flexhaler*
Dose delivery	Aerosolized liquid	Fine powder
Propellant	Some use a propellant (HFA)	No propellant
Administration	Slow, deep inhalation while pressing the canister (hand-breath coordination)	Quick, forceful inhalation (breath activated dose delivery; no need to press anything)
Spacer	Can be used for most (but not *QVAR RediHaler* or *Respimat* products) Helpful in patients incapable of hand-breath coordination and ↓ risk of thrush (with ICS)	Cannot be used
Shaking prior to use	Required for all products except: *QVAR RediHaler, Alvesco* and *Respimat* products, and *Atrovent HFA* (discussed in the COPD chapter)	Do not shake
Priming	Before first use and if not used for a certain period of time (see the Key Counseling Points section later in the chapter)	Not needed except for *Flexhaler* (prior to first use)

Note: QVAR RediHaler is a breath-activated aerosol, which has characteristics of both a DPI and MDI (see the ICS table).

LEUKOTRIENE MODIFYING AGENTS

Leukotrienes are mediators of airway inflammation. Leukotriene receptor antagonists (LTRAs) reduce airway edema, constriction and inflammation. Montelukast inhibits leukotriene D4 (LTD4), while zafirlukast inhibits both LTD4 and LTE4. Zileuton, a 5-lipoxygenase inhibitor, inhibits leukotriene formation.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Montelukast *(Singulair)* Tablet, chewable tablet, packet Also approved for allergic rhinitis and exercise-induced bronchoconstriction	10 mg daily in the evening Age 6-14 years: 5 mg daily in the evening Age 1-5 years: 4 mg daily in the evening EIB: 5 mg (6-14 years) or 10 mg (≥ 15 years) 2 hours before exercise	**BOXED WARNINGS** Montelukast: neuropsychiatric events (e.g., serious behavior and mood-related changes, including suicidal thoughts or actions) **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Zafirlukast and zileuton: hepatic impairment **WARNINGS** Neuropsychiatric events; monitor for signs of aggressive behavior, hostility, agitation, hallucinations, depression, suicidal thinking Systemic eosinophilia (montelukast and zafirlukast) **SIDE EFFECTS** Headache, dizziness, abdominal pain, ↑ LFTs, URTIs **MONITORING** LFTs (zafirlukast, zileuton), mood/behavior changes (montelukast) **NOTES** Montelukast granules: can be administered directly in the mouth, dissolved in a small amount (5 mL) of breast milk or formula or mixed with a spoonful of applesauce, carrots, rice or ice cream (do not mix with anything else); use within 15 minutes of opening the packet Zafirlukast: protect from moisture and light; dispense in original container
Zafirlukast *(Accolate)* Tablet	20 mg BID Age 5-11 years: 10 mg BID Take 1 hour before or 2 hours after meals (empty stomach)	
Zileuton *(Zyflo)* Tablet, ER tablet	*Zyflo:* 600 mg QID ER tablet: 1,200 mg BID within 1 hour after morning and evening meals Age < 12 years: not recommended	

LEUKOTRIENE MODIFYING AGENTS DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Montelukast is a minor substrate of CYP450 3A4 and 2C8/9 and a weak inhibitor of CYP2C8/9.
  - Gemfibrozil can ↑ levels of montelukast; lumacaftor can ↓ levels of montelukast.
- Zafirlukast is a major substrate of CYP2C9. It inhibits CYP2C9 (moderate) and CYP2C8 (weak).
  - Zafirlukast can ↑ levels of theophylline and CYP2C9 substrates (e.g., warfarin).
  - Erythromycin and theophylline ↓ zafirlukast levels.
- Zileuton is a minor substrate of CYP1A2, 2C9 and 3A4, and a weak inhibitor of CYP1A2. It can ↑ levels of theophylline, propranolol and warfarin.

THEOPHYLLINE

Theophylline blocks phosphodiesterase, causing an increase in cyclic adenosine monophosphate (cAMP) and release of epinephrine from adrenal medulla cells. This results in bronchodilation, but it also causes diuresis, CNS and cardiac stimulation and gastric acid secretion. Use of theophylline is limited by ↓ effectiveness, drug interactions and adverse effects.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Theophylline *(Elixophyllin, Theo-24)* ER capsule, ER tablet, elixir, oral solution, injection Active metabolites are caffeine and 3-methylxanthine	Oral loading dose: 5 mg/kg IBW (or TBW if < IBW) Oral maintenance dose: 300-600 mg daily **Therapeutic range** 5-15 mcg/mL Measure peak level at steady state, after 3 days of oral dosing	**WARNINGS** Can exacerbate cardiovascular arrhythmias, peptic ulcer disease and seizure disorders **SIDE EFFECTS** Nausea, vomiting, headache, insomnia, ↑ HR, tremor, nervousness Toxicity: persistent vomiting, arrhythmias, seizures **MONITORING** Theophylline levels, HR, CNS effects (insomnia, irritability), use of rescue inhaler **NOTES** Aminophylline contains 2:1 theophylline and ethylenediamine To convert aminophylline to theophylline, multiply by 0.8*; to convert theophylline to aminophylline, divide by 0.8 **Remember: ATM (Aminophylline → Theophylline Multiply)*

THEOPHYLLINE INTERACTIONS

Theophylline has saturable kinetics (first-order kinetics, followed by zero-order kinetics). In the higher end of the therapeutic range, small dose increases can result in large increases in theophylline concentrations (see the Pharmacokinetics chapter).

- Theophylline is a substrate of CYP1A2 (major), 3A4 and 2E1 (minor).
- CYP1A2 inhibitors that ↑ theophylline levels: cimetidine, ciprofloxacin, fluvoxamine, propranolol and zileuton.
- CYP3A4 inhibitors that ↑ theophylline levels: clarithromycin and erythromycin.
- Other drugs that ↑ theophylline levels: zafirlukast, alcohol, allopurinol, disulfiram, estrogen-containing oral contraceptives, methotrexate, pentoxifylline, propafenone and verapamil.
- Drugs that ↓ theophylline levels: carbamazepine, fosphenytoin, phenobarbital, phenytoin, primidone, rifampin, ritonavir, levothyroxine, St. John's wort and tobacco/marijuana smoking.
- Theophylline can ↓ lithium (via ↑ renal excretion) and zafirlukast.
- Conditions/foods that ↑ theophylline levels (due to ↓ theophylline clearance): CHF, liver disease or cirrhosis, acute pulmonary edema, cor pulmonale, fever, hypothyroidism, shock and high carbohydrate/low protein diet.
- Conditions/foods that can ↓ theophylline levels (due to ↑ theophylline clearance): low carbohydrate/high-protein diet, daily consumption of charbroiled beef, cystic fibrosis and hyperthyroidism.

ANTICHOLINERGICS

Anticholinergics, also called muscarinic antagonists, inhibit muscarinic cholinergic receptors, leading to bronchodilation. Short-acting anticholinergics (e.g., ipratropium) can be used in combination with SABAs in hospitalized patients with acute exacerbations. A long-acting anticholinergic, tiotropium is FDA-approved for asthma in patients ≥ 6 years of age with a history of exacerbations despite ICS/LABA therapy. Anticholinergics should not be used alone in asthma; they are add-on treatments to be used with an ICS. Refer to the COPD chapter for more information on anticholinergics.

MONOCLONAL ANTIBODIES FOR SEVERE ASTHMA

A monoclonal antibody can be considered in patients with severe asthma that remains uncontrolled despite maximized treatment with inhaled medications. These monoclonal antibodies are biologic, injectable medications that each have unique indications based on their molecular targets. For example, the interleukin antagonists are only appropriate for patients with eosinophilic asthma (i.e., an elevated blood eosinophil count). The patient's specific asthma phenotype should be determined prior to starting treatment to ensure appropriate drug selection.

DRUG	ADMINISTRATION	NOTES
IgG Monoclonal Antibody: inhibits IgE binding to the IgE receptor on mast cells and basophils		
Omalizumab *(Xolair)*	Administer SC every 2 or 4 weeks; dose and frequency based on pretreatment IgE serum levels and body weight Initiate in a healthcare setting under medical supervision (≥ 3 doses) Self-administration can be considered (after 3 doses) if specific criteria are met	Indication: severe allergic asthma Allergic asthma should be documented before use with a positive skin test or in vitro reactivity to a perennial aeroallergen Boxed warning for anaphylaxis (can occur at any point in treatment); patients must be observed after administration
Interleukin Receptor Antagonists: block interleukins (cytokines responsible for the growth, differentiation, recruitment, activation and survival of eosinophils) to reduce inflammation; all block interleukin 5 with the exception of dupilumab, which blocks interleukins 4 and 13		
Mepolizumab *(Nucala)*	Administer SC every 4 weeks	Indication: severe eosinophilic asthma Reslizumab: boxed warning for anaphylaxis; patients must be observed after administration Mepolizumab, dupilumab and *Fasenra Pen:* can be administered at home by a patient or caregiver
Reslizumab *(Cinqair)*	Administer IV once every 4 weeks	
Benralizumab *(Fasenra, Fasenra Pen)*	Administer SC every 4 weeks × 3 doses, then every 8 weeks	
Dupilumab *(Dupixent)*	Administer SC every other week	
Human Thymic Stromal Lymphopoietin Blocker: reduces multiple biomarkers of inflammation		
Tezepelumab *(Tezspire)*	Administer SC every 4 weeks	Indication: severe asthma (of any type) Can be administered at home

SPECIAL SITUATIONS

EXERCISE-INDUCED BRONCHOSPASM: *PREVENT IT*

A SABA or low-dose ICS plus formoterol, taken 5 – 15 minutes before exercise, is preferred to prevent most EIB. The effects of the SABA will last 2 – 3 hours, while the duration of the ICS plus formoterol can last up to 12 hours. Salmeterol (a LABA) can be used as an alternative to a SABA if a longer duration of symptom control is needed; it should be taken 30 minutes before exercise. If the patient is using a LABA for asthma maintenance, they should not use additional doses for EIB. LABAs should never be used alone for persistent asthma.

Montelukast can be taken two hours prior to exercise and lasts up to 24 hours. It is effective in only 50% of patients. Patients taking montelukast for asthma, or any other indication, should not take an additional dose to prevent EIB.

EIB is often a marker of inadequate asthma control. It might be necessary to start or increase a controller medication (e.g., an ICS) to control the EIB.

PREGNANCY: *KEEP CONTROL*

Asthma control can worsen during pregnancy. To ensure oxygen supply to the fetus, it is safer to treat asthma with medications than to have poorly controlled asthma. Down-titration of medications is not recommended, and exacerbations should be treated aggressively. An ICS should be continued during pregnancy and is still the preferred controller (either as needed or daily).

CASE SCENARIO

SG is a 35-year-old female with asthma. She brings a prescription for *Advair Diskus* to the pharmacy and requests a refill on her *ProAir RespiClick*. You review her medication refill history and see that she filled prescriptions for *Pulmicort Flexhaler* 3 weeks ago and *ProAir RespiClick* approximately 2 months ago.

SG tells you that she is stopping her *Pulmicort Flexhaler* and starting the *Advair Diskus* instead. She says she uses her *ProAir RespiClick* about 3 times a day, on at least 3 days of the week. She feels like she cannot have as active of a social life as she would like due to asthma attacks.

How would you assess SG's asthma control?
SG is not well controlled; she uses her SABA inhaler *(ProAir RespiClick)* > 2 days/week and has limitations to activity.

Is the change in treatment appropriate?
A step up in treatment is needed. The change from an ICS to an ICS/LABA combination product is appropriate.

What counseling points about her treatment are important for SG?
- Follow the specific instructions for inhaler technique.
- Use *Advair Diskus* twice daily to help control asthma symptoms. It is not a rescue medication.
- Rinse the mouth and spit after each dose of *Advair Diskus* to prevent thrush (an infection in the mouth).
- Use *ProAir RespiClick* as needed for shortness of breath. Using it more than twice weekly means asthma is not well controlled. If *ProAir RespiClick* is used too often, it can cause palpitations, nervousness or tremor.
- Monitor the counter on the *ProAir RespiClick* to make sure it does not run out before the next refill.
- Avoid triggers known to make asthma worse.

PATIENT SELF-MANAGEMENT AND EDUCATION

INHALERS

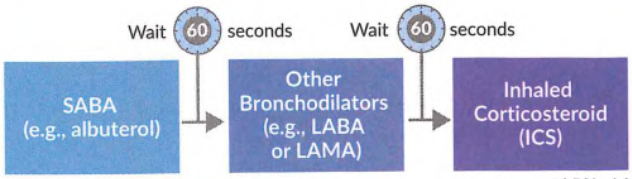
Incorrect inhaler use minimizes the amount of drug that reaches the lungs which can cause poor symptom control and exacerbations. Patient counseling and assessing inhaler technique and adherence is essential.

Patients should be aware of how to monitor the doses remaining in an inhaler. Some inhalers have an internal dose counter. Most controller inhalers are designed to last one month. SABA rescue inhalers last a varying amount of time depending on use, but for a patient with good asthma control, an albuterol inhaler should last about 12 months (or 3 – 4 months for the *Ventolin HFA* inhaler with 60 inhalations/canister). See the table below.

DRUG	INHALATIONS	EXAMPLE DOSAGE	SUPPLY
Maintenance Inhalers			
Advair Diskus	60	1 inhalation BID	30 days (60/2 inhalations daily)
QVAR RediHaler	120	1-2 inhalations BID	30 days (120/4 inhalations daily)
Mometasone DPI	60	2 inhalations daily	30 days (60/2 inhalations daily)
SABA Rescue Inhalers			
Albuterol MDI	200	2 inhalations per dose, used twice weekly (4 inhalations/week)	50 weeks (200/4 inhalations weekly)
Ventolin HFA	60		15 weeks (60/4 inhalations weekly)

TIMING AND ORDER OF USE

If prescribed > 1 inhalation of medication at a time, the patient should wait 60 seconds between each one. If using more than one inhaler, the sequence of inhalers is important. Bronchodilators (beta-2 agonists and anticholinergics) work faster than ICS. Using bronchodilators first will open the airways quickly, allowing the ICS to travel deeper into the lungs.



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NEBULIZERS

A nebulizer is a device that turns liquid medication into a fine mist. The fine mist can be inhaled through a face mask or mouthpiece into the lungs. Nebulizers use natural breathing, making medication delivery easy for infants, children and older adults. There are three types of nebulizers: jet, ultrasound and mesh. Check the medication information to see which nebulizer device is recommended.

Albuterol comes as a nebulizer solution in both unit dose packaging and a 20 mL vial. The two common concentrations are 0.083% solution (contains 2.5 mg/3 mL), and 0.5% solution (contains 2.5 mg/0.5 mL). The 0.083% solution is a ready-to-use preparation that can be placed directly into the nebulizer; no dilution is required. Concentrated solutions (i.e., ≥ 0.5%) must be diluted with normal saline prior to use.

SPACERS

Spacers are open tubes that are placed between the mouthpiece of an MDI and the mouth of the patient to help with medication delivery. Spacers are especially useful for children and anyone with dexterity issues (i.e., difficulty pressing down and breathing in at the same time), and they reduce the risk of thrush (see the Study Tip Gal). They can not be used with a DPI. Clean spacers at least once a week in warm, soapy water.

WITH A SPACER, MORE DRUG GETS INTO THE LUNGS

Inhaler with spacer

©UWorld

Spacers are helpful for children and anyone who has difficulty with hand-breath coordination (e.g., pressing down on the inhaler while breathing in at the same time) with an MDI. Plus, spacers reduce the risk of thrush from inhaled corticosteroids.

Common spacers:
AeroChamber, OptiHaler, OptiChamber

PEAK FLOW METERS

Peak flow meters are handheld devices that measure the peak expiratory flow rate (PEFR), which is the maximum flow rate from a forceful exhalation, starting from fully inflated lungs. The patient's best PEFR is called their personal best (PB), which can be measured by spirometry. The measurement takes into account the patient's height, sex and age because the PEFR depends on the muscular strength of the patient. Patients can measure their PB themselves by taking peak flow readings twice a day (morning and evening) for 2 – 3 weeks when asthma is in good control. The highest reading that occurs most frequently is the PB.

Peak flow meters are beneficial in patients with frequent asthma exacerbations, moderate to severe asthma (Steps 3 – 5), poor perception of airflow obstruction or unexplained response to environmental factors. When used correctly, peak flow meters can identify exacerbations early (even before the patient is symptomatic), allowing treatment to begin sooner.

An asthma action plan is developed by the healthcare provider so the patient knows how to manage symptoms at home and avoid hospitalizations due to an exacerbation. The action plan uses the patient's PB and outlines "zones" of control based on the percentage of their PB. Each "zone" is then given a specific action to follow (see the example on the next page).

PEAK FLOW METER TECHNIQUE

- Use the peak flow meter every morning upon awakening and before the use of any asthma medications. Proper technique and best effort are essential. Less than the best effort can lead to taking unnecessary medication.
- Move the indicator to the bottom of the numbered scale. Stand up straight. Exhale comfortably.
- Inhale as deeply as possible. Place lips firmly around the mouthpiece, creating a tight seal.
- Blow out as hard and as fast as possible. Write down the PEFR.
- Repeat steps two more times, with enough rest in between. Record the highest value.
- Compare the peak flow value to your personal asthma action plan and follow the steps as instructed.

PEAK FLOW METER CARE

- Always use the same brand of peak flow meter.
- Clean at least once a week using warm water and mild soap; if you have an infection, clean the meter more frequently. Rinse gently; do not use brushes to clean the inside of the peak flow meter. Do not place peak flow meters in boiling water. Allow the meter to air dry before using again.

ZONES OF AN ASTHMA ACTION PLAN

Green zone (> 80 – 100% of personal best)

- Indicates "all clear" – good control
- Patients are instructed to follow routine maintenance plan

Yellow zone (50 – 80% of personal best)

- Indicates "caution" – worsening lung function
- Patient-specific intervention required (action plan) – usually an increase in rescue inhaler use and the addition or increase of other medications

Red zone (< 50% of personal best)

- Indicates "medical alert" – seek medical attention
- Action plan includes using a rescue inhaler, possibly steroids or going to the emergency department

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SAMPLE ASTHMA ACTION PLAN (ADULT)

Asthma Action Plan

For: _____ Doctor: _____ Date: _____

Doctor's Phone Number: _____ Hospital/Emergency Department Phone Number: _____

GREEN ZONE

Doing Well

- No cough, wheeze, chest tightness, or shortness of breath during the day or night
- Can do usual activities

And, if a peak flow meter is used,

Peak flow: more than _____ (80 percent or more of my best peak flow)

My best peak flow is: _____

Take these long-term control medicines each day (Include an anti-inflammatory).

Medicine	How much to take	When to take it

Before exercise	❑ _____	❑ 2 or ❑ 4 puffs	_____	5 minutes before exercise

YELLOW ZONE

Asthma is Getting Worse

- Cough, wheeze, chest tightness, or shortness of breath, or
- Waking at night due to asthma, or
- Can do some, but not all, usual activities

-Or-

Peak flow: _____ to _____ (50 to 79 percent of my best peak flow)

My best peak flow is: _____

First **Add: quick-relief medicine—and keep taking your GREEN ZONE medicine.**

_____ (rescue inhaler) ❑ 2 or ❑ 4 puffs, every 20 minutes for up to 1 hour ❑ Nebulizer, once

Second **If your symptoms (and peak flow, if used) return to GREEN ZONE after 1 hour of above treatment:**

❑ Continue monitoring to be sure you stay in the green zone.

-Or-

If your symptoms (and peak flow, if used) do not return to GREEN ZONE after 1 hour of above treatment:

❑ Take: _____ (rescue inhaler) ❑ 2 or ❑ 4 puffs or ❑ Nebulizer

❑ Add: _____ (oral steroid) mg per day For _____ (3–10) days

❑ Call the doctor ❑ before/ ❑ within _____ hours after taking the oral steroid.

RED ZONE

Medical Alert!

- Very short of breath, or
- Quick-relief medicines have not helped, or
- Cannot do usual activities, or
- Symptoms are same or get worse after 24 hours in Yellow Zone

-Or-

Peak flow: less than _____ (50 percent of my best peak flow)

Take this medicine:

❑ _____ (rescue inhaler) ❑ 4 or ❑ 6 puffs or ❑ Nebulizer

❑ _____ (oral steroid) mg

Then call your doctor NOW. Go to the hospital or call an ambulance if:

- You are still in the red zone after 15 minutes AND
- You have not reached your doctor.

DANGER SIGNS

- Trouble walking and talking due to shortness of breath
- Lips or fingernails are blue

- **Take 4 or 6 puffs of your quick-relief medicine AND**
- **Go to the hospital or call for an ambulance _____ (phone) NOW!**

Adapted from ©www.nhlbi.nih.gov

CASE SCENARIO

ES is a 29-year-old male with asthma. He comes into the pharmacy asking for help interpreting his peak flow readings. He states that he feels fine, but is worried that his peak flow readings are declining. ES is able to demonstrate appropriate use of the peak flow meter, and reports that he has been checking at the appropriate time (first thing in the morning, before medications and taking the best of three readings). His personal best (PB) is 480 L/min, and his readings from the last few days are as follows:

Monday: 400 L/min (83% PB)
Tuesday: 388 L/min (81% PB)
Wednesday: 420 L/min (88% PB)

What zone is ES in?

ES is in the green zone. All readings fall within 80–100% of his personal best.

What steps should ES take today?

ES should be advised to follow the instructions in his specific asthma action plan. Make sure this is filled out to include his medications (rescue and maintenance) and personal range of each zone:

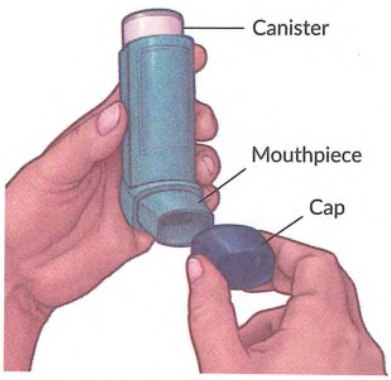
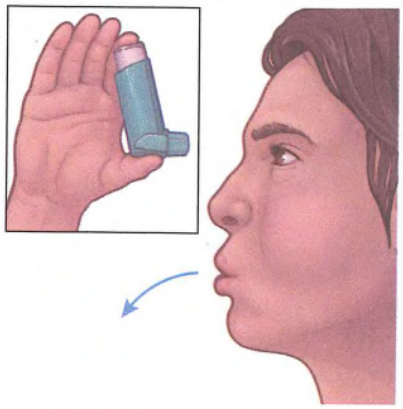
- Green Zone (> 80%) ≥ 384 L/min
- Yellow Zone (50–80%) = 240 mL–384 L/min
- Red Zone (< 50%) ≤ 240 L/min

Since he feels well and his peak flow readings are in the green zone, he should continue his maintenance medications. His action plan might include using a rescue inhaler prior to exercise. For anyone with asthma, it is important to avoid triggers and monitor for symptoms, regardless of peak flow readings.

KEY COUNSELING POINTS

SELECT METERED-DOSE INHALERS

Albuterol *(Ventolin HFA, ProAir HFA)*, budesonide/formoterol *(Symbicort, Breyna)*, fluticasone, mometasone/formoterol *(Dulera)*, others

STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3
		
Make sure the canister is fully inserted into the actuator (if it comes separately). Always use the actuator that came with the canister. Shake the inhaler well for 5 seconds immediately before each spray (except for *QVAR RediHaler, Atrovent HFA, Respimat* products or *Alvesco*, which do not need to be shaken). Remove cap from the mouthpiece and check mouthpiece for foreign objects prior to use.	Breathe out fully through your mouth, expelling as much air from your lungs as possible. Holding the inhaler upright (as shown in the picture), place the mouthpiece into your mouth and close your lips around it.	While breathing in slowly and deeply through your mouth, press the top of the canister all the way down with your index finger. Right after the spray comes out, take your finger off the canister. After you have inhaled all the way, take the inhaler out of your mouth and close your mouth. Hold your breath as long as possible, up to 10 seconds, then breathe normally. If another inhalation is needed, wait 1 minute and repeat Steps 1-3. Place cap back on the mouthpiece after use. For any inhaler that contains an ICS (e.g., *Symbicort, Breyna, Dulera)*: rinse your mouth with water and spit out the water to prevent thrush. Do not swallow the water.

TO PRIME

Ventolin HFA, ProAir HFA
Spray 4 times (3 for *ProAir)* away from the face, shaking between sprays. Prime again if > 14 days from last use or if you drop it.

Fluticasone HFA, *Dulera*
Spray 4 times away from the face, shaking between sprays. Prime again with just 1 spray if > 7 days from last use (> 5 days for *Dulera)*.

Symbicort, Breyna
Spray 2 times away from the face, shaking between sprays. Prime again if > 7 days from last use or if you drop it.

TO CLEAN

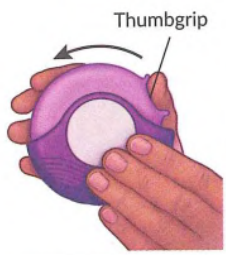
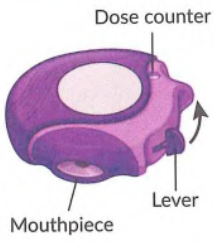
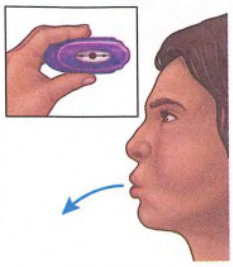
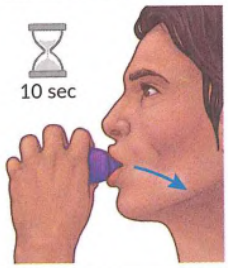
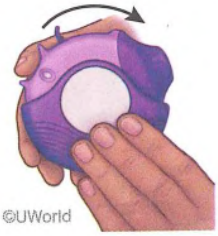
Ventolin HFA, ProAir HFA
To prevent medication buildup and blockage, remove the metal canister (do not let this get wet) and rinse the mouthpiece only under warm running water for 30 seconds, then turn upside down and rinse under warm water for another 30 seconds. Shake to remove excess water and let air dry. Clean at least weekly.

Fluticasone HFA
Use a clean cotton swab dampened with water to clean the small circular opening where the medication sprays out. Gently twist the swab in a circular motion to remove any medication buildup. Do not take the canister out of the plastic actuator. Wipe the inside of the mouthpiece with a damp tissue. Let air dry overnight.

Symbicort, Breyna, Dulera
Wipe the inside and outside of the mouthpiece opening with a clean, dry cloth. Do not put into water. Clean every 7 days.

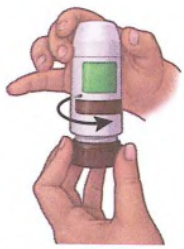
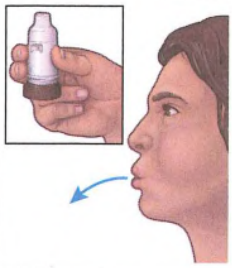
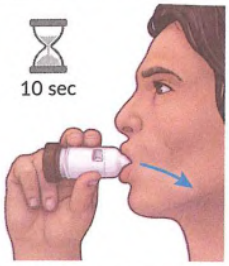
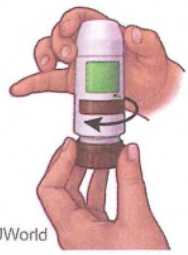
SELECT DRY POWDER INHALERS

Fluticasone/salmeterol (*Advair Diskus*)

STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3	STEP 4	STEP 5
				
Hold the *Diskus* in your left hand and put the thumb of your right hand in the thumb grip. Push the thumb grip away from you as far as it will go until the mouthpiece appears and the *Diskus* snaps into position.	Hold the *Diskus* in a level, flat position with the mouthpiece towards you. Slide the lever away from the mouthpiece until it clicks.	Before using, breathe out fully while holding the *Diskus* away from your mouth. Do not tilt the *Diskus*.	Put the mouthpiece to your lips. Breathe in quickly and deeply through the inhaler. Do not breathe in through your nose. Remove the *Diskus* from your mouth and hold your breath as long as possible, up to 10 seconds. Then, breathe out slowly.	Close the *Diskus* by putting your thumb in the thumb grip and sliding it as far back towards you as it will go, until the *Diskus* clicks shut. Rinse your mouth with water and spit out the water to prevent thrush. Do not swallow the water.

TO CLEAN
Do not wash the *Diskus*. Store in a dry place.

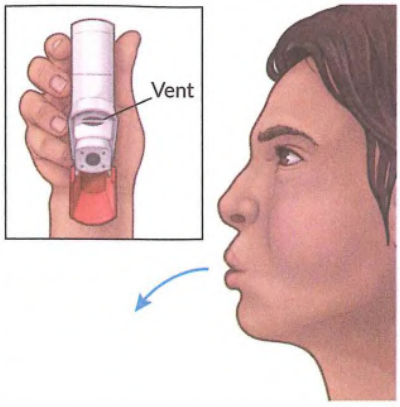
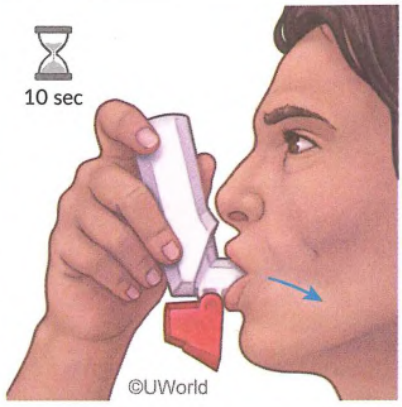
Budesonide (*Pulmicort Flexhaler*)

STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3	STEP 4	STEP 5
				
Twist off the white cover.	Holding the inhaler with one hand, twist the brown base fully in one direction as far as it will go with the other hand. Twist it back again in the other direction as far as it will go. You will hear a "click" during one of the twisting movements. The dose is now loaded (note: only one dose is loaded at a time, no matter how often you twist the brown base, but the dose counter will continue to advance).	Hold the inhaler upright in one hand. Turn your head away from the inhaler and breathe out fully.	Place the mouthpiece in your mouth and close your lips around the mouthpiece. Breathe in deeply and forcefully through the inhaler. Remove the inhaler from your mouth and breathe out.	Replace the white cover on the inhaler and twist shut. Rinse your mouth with water and spit out the water to prevent thrush.

TO PRIME
Twist off the white cover. Holding the inhaler upright, twist the brown base fully in one direction as far as it will go and then fully back. You will hear a "click" during one of the twisting motions. Repeat twisting motion again (back and forth). The inhaler is now primed and ready to load your first dose. This inhaler does not need to be primed again (even after long periods of no use).

TO CLEAN
Wipe the mouthpiece with a dry tissue weekly. Do not use water or immerse it in water.

Albuterol (*ProAir RespiClick*), fluticasone/salmeterol (*AirDuo RespiClick*)

STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3
		
Make sure the cap is closed before each dose. Hold the inhaler upright as you open the cap fully. Open the cap all the way back until you hear a "click." Your inhaler is now ready to use. Do not open the cap unless you are taking a dose. Note: opening and closing the cap without inhaling a dose will waste medication and can damage your inhaler.	Turn your head away from the inhaler so you do not breathe into the mouthpiece. Breathe out through your mouth and push as much air from your lungs as you can.	Put the mouthpiece in your mouth and close your lips around it. Breathe in quickly and deeply through your mouth, until your lungs feel completely full of air. Do not let your lips or fingers block the vent above the mouthpiece. Hold your breath for as long as possible, up to 10 seconds. Remove the inhaler from your mouth. Check the dose counter on the back of the inhaler to make sure you received the dose. Close the cap over the mouthpiece after each use of the inhaler. Make sure the cap closes firmly into place. For *AirDuo RespiClick:* rinse your mouth with water and spit out the water to prevent thrush. Do not swallow the water.
TO PRIME None needed.	**TO CLEAN** Keep your inhaler dry and clean at all times. Do not wash or put any part of your inhaler in water. If the mouthpiece needs cleaning, gently wipe it with a dry cloth or tissue after using.	

ALL PATIENTS WITH ASTHMA

See the Drug Formulations and Patient Counseling chapter for language/layman's terminology.

- Always have your rescue inhaler with you for asthma attacks.
- If asthma symptoms get worse, or if you increase the use of your rescue inhaler for asthma attacks, contact your healthcare provider right away.

MONTELUKAST

- Take in the evening.
- Can cause suicidal ideation, behavior and mood changes.
- Do not use more than one dose within 24 hours. If using daily for another indication, do not take another dose to prevent exercise-induced asthma.
- Oral granules:
  - Administer within 15 minutes of opening the packet.
  - Can be mixed with a teaspoonful of baby formula, breast milk, applesauce, mashed carrots, rice or ice cream or given directly in the mouth.

BUDESONIDE NEBULIZER SUSPENSION

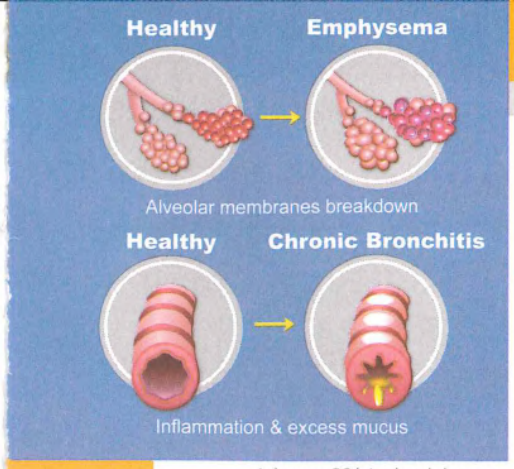
- Store upright, protected from light, at room temperature.
- Ampules should be used within two weeks of opening the aluminum package.
- Gently swirl the ampule in a circular motion before use.
- Rinse mouth with water and spit it out after each dose. If a face mask was used, wash face after each treatment.

Select Guidelines/References

Global Initiative for Asthma (GINA). Global Strategy for Asthma Management and Prevention, 2023. http://www.ginasthma.org.

National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute. Expert Panel Report 3: Guidelines for the Diagnosis and Management of Asthma. August 2007.

National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute. 2020 Focused Updates to the Asthma Management Guidelines: A Report from the National Asthma Education and Prevention Program Coordinating Committee Expert Panel Working Group. December 2020.



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CHAPTER 42

CHRONIC OBSTRUCTIVE PULMONARY DISEASE (COPD)

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= Study Tip Gal

BACKGROUND

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is a respiratory condition that causes obstructed airflow from the lungs. It is one of the leading causes of death worldwide. COPD is most commonly caused by tobacco smoke, but can be caused by other air pollutants (e.g., smoke from fires or coal burning, marijuana, occupational hazards). Long-term exposure to these gases or particles causes chronic inflammation in the lungs, resulting in emphysema and/or bronchitis.

Emphysema is the destruction of the small passages in the lungs, called alveoli. Bronchitis (or bronchiolitis) is inflammation and narrowing of the bronchial tubes and results in mucus production. Individuals with alpha-1 antitrypsin (AAT) deficiency, a genetic condition, have a higher risk of developing COPD because AAT protects lungs from damage caused by inflammation.

DIAGNOSIS

COPD should be suspected in any patient with chronic, progressive symptoms [e.g., dyspnea (shortness of breath), cough, sputum production, wheezing] and risk factors (e.g., tobacco smoke exposure). Other common reasons for shortness of breath and cough should be ruled out, such as asthma, chronic heart failure and pulmonary infections (e.g., tuberculosis).

Asthma is the most difficult to differentiate from COPD (see Study Tip Gal to the right). The limitation of airflow in asthma is reversible with medication. In COPD, the limitation of airflow is not fully reversible and progresses over time, leading to a gradual loss of lung function.

Spirometry is required to assess lung function and make a diagnosis of COPD. It provides an objective measurement of airflow obstruction and is the most reproducible test available. Spirometry measures the total amount of air a person can breathe out (forced vital capacity, or FVC) and the amount of air exhaled in one second (forced expiratory volume, or FEV1). A post-bronchodilator FEV1/FVC < 0.70 confirms a diagnosis of COPD.

KEY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN COPD AND ASTHMA

FEATURE	COPD	ASTHMA
Age of onset	Usually > 40 years	Usually < 40 years
Smoking history	Usually > 20 years	Uncommon
Sputum production	Common	Infrequent
Allergies	Uncommon	Common
Symptoms	Persistent	Intermittent and variable
Disease process	Progressive, worsens over time	Stable, does not worsen over time
Exacerbations	A common complication	A common complication
First-line treatment	Bronchodilators	Inhaled corticosteroids

COPD ASSESSMENT

A COPD assessment includes the following four components:

- Degree of airflow limitation
- Symptom assessment
- Risk of exacerbations
- Presence of comorbidities

DEGREE OF AIRFLOW LIMITATION

The post-bronchodilator FEV1, assessed using spirometry, determines the severity of airflow limitation. The GOLD guidelines use a grading system of 1 – 4 to classify patients based on spirometry results. The grade assignment is used to assess prognosis and disease progression.

SEVERITY OF POST-BRONCHODILATOR AIRFLOW LIMITATION

GRADE	SEVERITY	AIRFLOW LIMITATION
In patients with FEV1/FVC < 0.70		
GOLD 1	Mild	FEV1 ≥ 80% predicted
GOLD 2	Moderate	FEV1 50-79% predicted
GOLD 3	Severe	FEV1 30-49% predicted
GOLD 4	Very severe	FEV1 < 30% predicted

SYMPTOM ASSESSMENT

Scoring systems are used for symptom assessment and are integral to selecting drug treatment. The two most commonly used scoring systems are described below; higher scores indicate worse symptoms.

- Modified Medical Research Council (mMRC) dyspnea scale: assesses breathlessness, with scores ranging from 0 – 4.
- COPD Assessment Test (CAT): assesses a range of symptoms (e.g., cough, mucus production, chest tightness, energy level, breathlessness), with scores ranging from 0 – 40.

The application of these two scoring systems is shown in the Combined Assessment of COPD chart and case scenarios on the following page.

RISK OF EXACERBATIONS

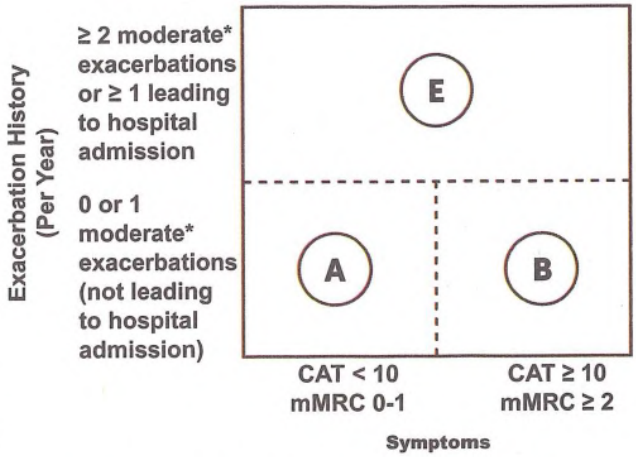
A COPD exacerbation is an increase in respiratory symptoms that worsen over < 14 days. The risk of exacerbations increases as airflow limitation worsens. Hospitalization for an exacerbation is associated with an increased risk of death. Taking measures to prevent and quickly treat exacerbations is an important component of COPD management.

COMORBIDITIES

Comorbid conditions, such as cardiovascular diseases, osteoporosis, diabetes, depression, anxiety, skeletal muscle dysfunction, respiratory infections and lung cancer should be monitored and treated appropriately. Poor control of comorbid conditions can independently influence mortality and hospitalizations.

COMBINED ASSESSMENT OF COPD

The combined assessment of COPD focuses on symptom assessment and risk of exacerbations as the critical components that drive treatment. Symptoms should be assessed using the mMRC or CAT, and history of exacerbations in the past year should be documented. The patient is then assigned to a group (A, B or E), which determines the initial treatment warranted (see Initial Pharmacologic Therapy on the following page).



**An exacerbation is classified as moderate if it required treatment with an oral steroid ± antibiotics.*

CASE SCENARIOS

These examples illustrate how the combined assessment is used to direct treatment.

Patient 1: a 62-year-old male with FEV1/FVC < 0.7 and FEV1 40% predicted has a CAT score of 16 and no exacerbations in the past year. *Assessment:* confirmed diagnosis of COPD, GOLD grade 3, group B.

Patient 2: a 62-year-old female with FEV1/FVC < 0.7 and FEV1 40% predicted has a CAT score of 16 and 2 exacerbations in the past year, one of which required hospitalization. *Assessment:* confirmed diagnosis of COPD, GOLD grade 3, group E.

Both patients have the same disease severity (based on FEV1 and CAT scores). In both cases, better symptom control is needed, but patient 2 needs more intensive treatment due to her history of exacerbations. See the section on Initial Pharmacologic Therapy to review the differences in treatment recommendations.

NON-DRUG TREATMENT

Smoking cessation is an essential management strategy proven to slow the progression of COPD. Healthcare providers should encourage all tobacco users to quit using proven strategies (see Tobacco Cessation chapter). Vaccinations reduce the risk of hospitalizations and death due to serious respiratory illness. Patients with COPD should receive all age-appropriate vaccines per ACIP recommendations, including an annual influenza vaccine and pneumococcal vaccinations (see Immunizations chapter).

To improve outcomes, it is essential to routinely assess inhaler technique (see detailed instructions on inhaler use, priming and cleaning at the end of the chapter) and adherence. Pulmonary rehabilitation programs help improve quality of life and symptoms. Long-term oxygen treatment has been shown to increase survival in patients with severe resting hypoxemia.

DRUG TREATMENT

The medications used to treat COPD decrease symptoms and/or prevent complications, such as exacerbations and hospitalizations. The patient's treatment regimen should be individualized based on CAT and/or mMRC score and risk of exacerbations (see the ABE assessment chart on the previous page and initial treatment recommendations to the right).

Bronchodilators are the first-line treatment for all patients. A short-acting beta-2 agonist (SABA) or short-acting muscarinic antagonist (SAMA) can be used as needed for patients with intermittent symptoms, or a long-acting beta-2 agonist (LABA) and/or long-acting muscarinic antagonist (LAMA) may be appropriate.

Inhaled corticosteroids (ICS) (see Asthma chapter) are recommended in select patients with a history of exacerbations and an eosinophil count (a marker of inflammation) ≥ 300 cells/μL. ICS have a risk of adverse effects (e.g., pneumonia, oral candidiasis, hoarse voice) that can limit their use (see the Escalation of Treatment algorithm on the following page). An ICS is not recommended in patients with lower eosinophil counts (< 100 cells/μL) because there is no demonstrated benefit. Dupilumab is a SC monoclonal antibody that can be used in patients with eosinophilic COPD not well controlled on triple therapy (LABA + LAMA + ICS).

Combination treatment is often required (e.g., LABA + LAMA ± ICS); in this case, use of a single inhaler containing 2 or 3 medications is preferred to improve adherence. All patients taking a long-acting bronchodilator should be prescribed a SABA and/or SAMA to relieve acute symptoms as needed.

Other, less commonly used treatments include azithromycin and the phosphodiesterase-4 (PDE-4) inhibitor roflumilast, which are used in only the most severe cases. Long-term monotherapy with oral steroids is not recommended.

INITIAL PHARMACOLOGIC THERAPY

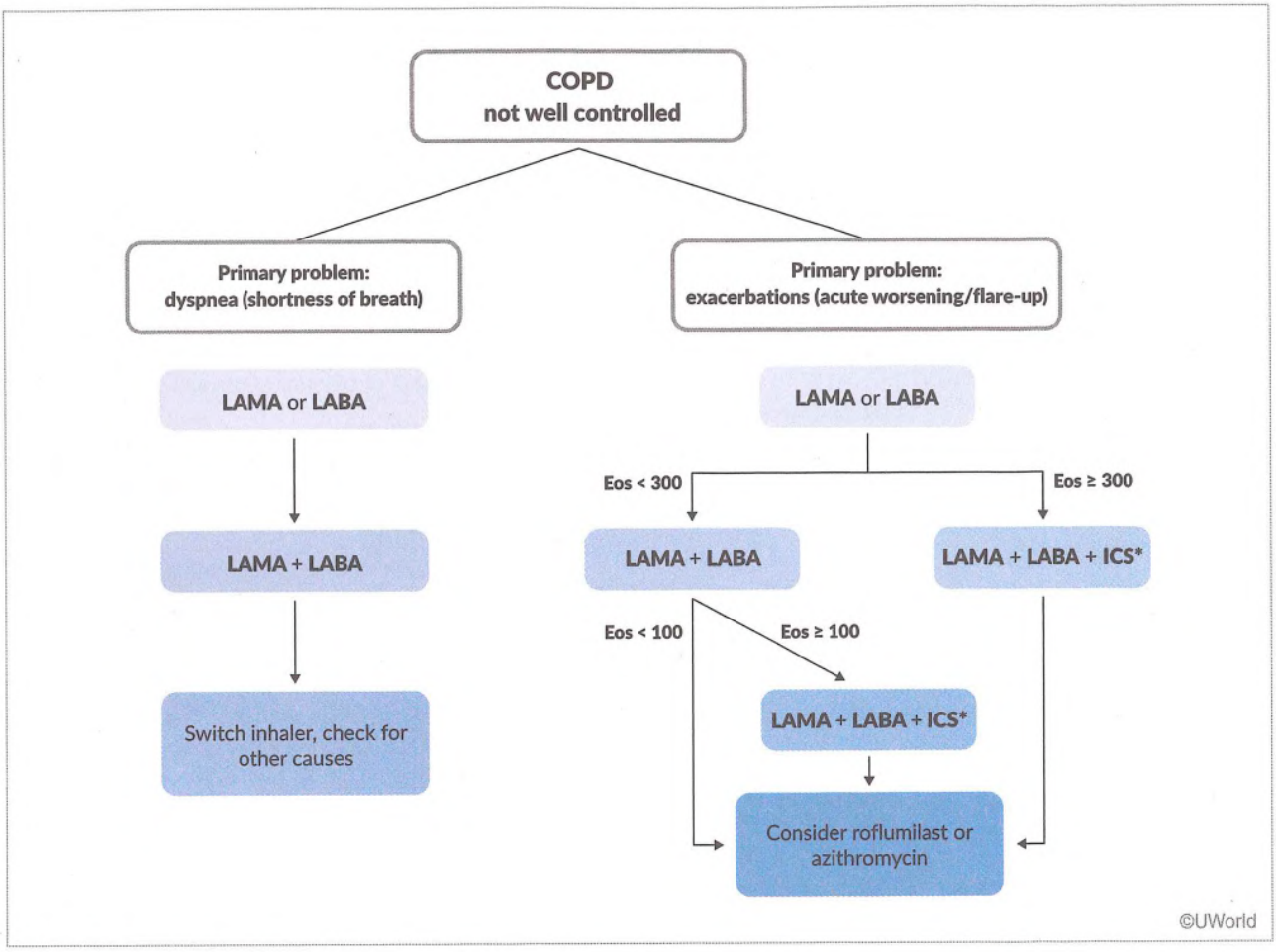
PATIENT GROUP	RECOMMENDED TREATMENT*
A	A bronchodilator: SAMA PRN, SABA PRN, LAMA or LABA**
B	LAMA + LABA
E	LAMA + LABA If blood eosinophils ≥ 300 cells/μL, consider: LAMA + LABA + ICS

**All patients receiving LAMA and/or LABA treatment should receive rescue therapy with a SABA and/or SAMA.*

***Long-acting bronchodilators (i.e., LAMA or LABA) are preferred over short-acting bronchodilators (i.e., SAMA or SABA), except for patients with only occasional dyspnea.*

ESCALATION OF TREATMENT

An assessment of inhaler use and adherence, non-pharmacologic measures, symptoms and exacerbations is repeated at each follow-up visit. If there was an appropriate response to treatment, no medication changes are necessary. If the response was not appropriate, treatment should be escalated based on the primary concern (dyspnea or exacerbations).



Eos = blood eosinophils (cells/μL)
**De-escalate (remove ICS) or decrease ICS dose if significant adverse effects occur (consider risk of increased exacerbations).*

COPD EXACERBATIONS

COPD exacerbations can be caused by respiratory tract infections (viral or bacterial) or other factors, such as increased air pollution. Treatment includes a SABA with or without a SAMA. If the exacerbation is moderate or severe, injectable or oral systemic steroids are typically used. If there is sputum purulence with increased sputum volume or dyspnea, or if mechanical ventilation is required, antibiotics should be used (see Infectious Diseases II chapter).

INHALER PRODUCTS

Inhaled medications are preferred for COPD. There are two categories of inhalers: metered-dose inhalers (MDIs) and dry powder inhalers (DPIs). Consult the Asthma chapter for a review of the differences between these two inhaler types and for a list of maintenance inhalers that are indicated in asthma vs. COPD. A review of appropriate technique is provided for select inhalers at the end of this chapter and the Asthma chapter.

MUSCARINIC ANTAGONISTS/ANTICHOLINERGICS

Muscarinic antagonists (also called anticholinergics) cause bronchodilation by blocking the constricting action of acetylcholine at M3 muscarinic receptors in bronchial smooth muscle.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Short-Acting Muscarinic Antagonist (SAMA)		**WARNINGS** Use with caution in patients with narrow-angle glaucoma, urinary retention, benign prostatic hyperplasia or bladder neck obstruction **SIDE EFFECTS** Dry mouth, upper respiratory tract infections (nasopharyngitis, sinusitis), cough, bitter taste **MONITORING** S/sx at each visit, smoking status, COPD questionnaires, annual spirometry **NOTES** Avoid spraying in the eyes *HandiHaler* devices are DPIs that come with a capsule that is placed into the device; do not swallow the capsules by mouth *Pressair* devices are DPIs that have an indicator window that turns from green to red if the dose was inhaled properly ICS-containing products: rinse mouth with water and spit to prevent oral candidiasis (thrush)
Ipratropium bromide *(Atrovent HFA)* 17 mcg/inh	MDI: 2 inhalations Q4-6H PRN	
Nebulizer solution 0.02%	Nebulizer: 0.5 mg Q6-8H PRN	
+ albuterol *(Combivent Respimat)* 20 mcg ipratropium + 100 mcg albuterol/inh	MDI: 1 inhalation Q4-6H PRN	
Nebulizer solution 0.5 mg ipratropium + 2.5 mg albuterol per 3 mL	Nebulizer: 3 mL Q4-6H PRN	
Long-Acting Muscarinic Antagonists (LAMAs)		
Tiotropium		
Spiriva HandiHaler 18 mcg capsule	DPI: inhale contents of 1 capsule via *HandiHaler* device daily (requires 2 puffs)	
Spiriva Respimat 2.5 mcg/inh	MDI: 2 inhalations daily	
+ olodaterol *(Stiolto Respimat)*		
Aclidinium *(Tudorza Pressair)* 400 mcg/inh	DPI: 1 inhalation BID	
+ formoterol *(Duaklir Pressair)*		
Glycopyrrolate (only in combination products)	MDI: 2 inhalations BID	
+ formoterol *(Bevespi Aerosphere)*		
+ formoterol/budesonide *(Breztri Aerosphere)*		
Revefenacin *(Yupelri)* 175 mcg/inh nebulizer solution	Nebulizer: 175 mcg daily	
Umeclidinium *(Incruse Ellipta)* 62.5 mcg/inh	DPI: 1 inhalation daily	
+ vilanterol *(Anoro Ellipta)*		
+ vilanterol/fluticasone *(Trelegy Ellipta)*		

BETA-2 AGONISTS

Beta-2 agonists bind to beta-2 receptors in the lung, causing relaxation of bronchial smooth muscle and bronchodilation. LABAs can be used as monotherapy only for COPD, not asthma (see Boxed Warning below). SABAs are discussed in more detail in the Asthma chapter.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Long-Acting Beta-2 Agonists (LABAs)		**BOXED WARNINGS** LABAs increase the risk of asthma-related deaths when used alone; they should only be used in asthma patients who are currently receiving but are not adequately controlled on an inhaled corticosteroid **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Status asthmaticus, acute episodes of asthma or COPD, monotherapy in the treatment of asthma **SIDE EFFECTS** Nervousness, tremor, tachycardia, palpitations, hyperglycemia, ↓ K, cough **MONITORING** S/sx at each visit, smoking status, COPD questionnaires, annual spirometry **NOTES** Arformoterol contains the R-isomer of formoterol ICS-containing products: rinse mouth with water and spit to prevent oral candidiasis (thrush)
Salmeterol *(Serevent Diskus)* 50 mcg/inh **+ fluticasone *(Advair Diskus, Wixela Inhub)***	DPI: 1 inhalation BID	
Formoterol *(Perforomist)* 20 mcg/2 mL nebulizer solution **+ budesonide *(Symbicort, Breyna)*** **+ mometasone *(Dulera)*** + glycopyrrolate *(Bevespi Aerosphere)* **+ glycopyrrolate/budesonide *(Breztri Aerosphere)***	Nebulizer: 20 mcg BID MDI: 2 inhalations BID	
+ aclidinium *(Duaklir Pressair)*	DPI: 1 inhalation BID	
Arformoterol *(Brovana)* 15 mcg/2 mL nebulizer solution	Nebulizer: 15 mcg BID	
Olodaterol *(Striverdi Respimat)* 2.5 mcg/inh **+ tiotropium *(Stiolto Respimat)***	MDI: 2 inhalations daily	
Vilanterol (only in combination products) 25 mcg/inh **+ fluticasone *(Breo Ellipta)*** **+ umeclidinium *(Anoro Ellipta)*** **+ umeclidinium/fluticasone *(Trelegy Ellipta)***	DPI: 1 inhalation daily	

PHOSPHODIESTERASE INHIBITORS

Roflumilast is a PDE-4 inhibitor that ↑ cAMP levels, leading to a reduction in lung inflammation. This oral medication should be used in combination with at least one long-acting bronchodilator; its use is reserved for patients with very severe COPD, chronic bronchitis and a history of exacerbations. Ensifentrine *(Ohtuvayre)* is a PDE-3 and PDE-4 inhibitor nebulizer suspension whose place in therapy is not yet established.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Roflumilast *(Daliresp)* Tablet	Start 250 mcg daily for 4 weeks (to improve tolerability), then 500 mcg daily	**CONTRAINDICATION** Moderate to severe liver impairment **WARNINGS** Weight loss, psychiatric events (depression, mood changes) including suicidality **SIDE EFFECTS** Diarrhea, nausea, ↓ appetite, insomnia, headache **MONITORING** S/sx at each visit, LFTs, smoking status, COPD questionnaires, annual spirometry

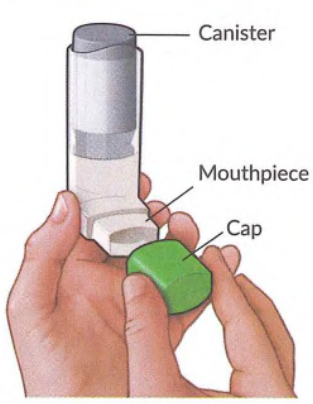
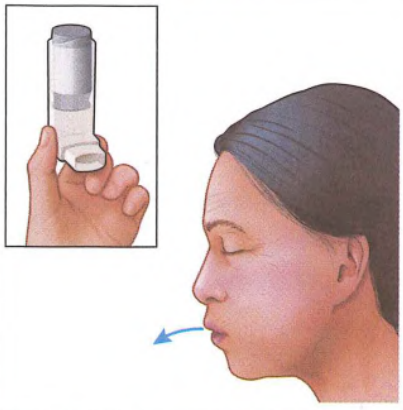
ROFLUMILAST DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Roflumilast is a substrate of CYP450 3A4 and 1A2. Use with strong enzyme inducers (e.g., carbamazepine, phenobarbital, phenytoin, rifampin) is not recommended. Use with CYP3A4 inhibitors or dual CYP3A4 and CYP1A2 inhibitors (e.g., erythromycin, ketoconazole, fluvoxamine, cimetidine) will ↑ roflumilast levels.

KEY COUNSELING POINTS

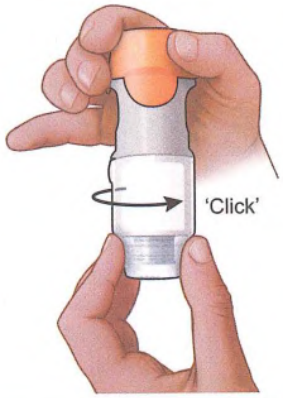
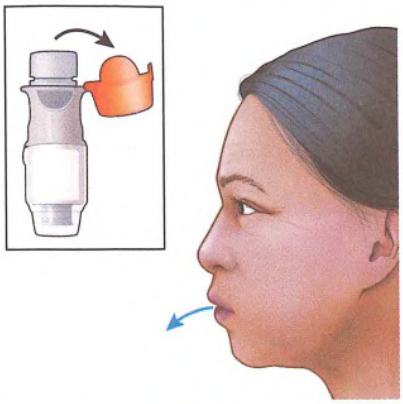
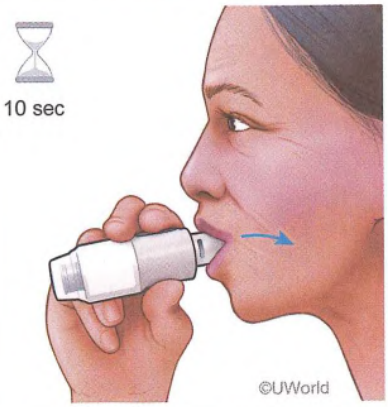
SELECT METERED-DOSE INHALERS

Ipratropium bromide (*Atrovent HFA*)

STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3
		
Make sure the canister is fully inserted into the actuator (if it comes separately). The *Atrovent HFA* plastic actuator should only be used with the *Atrovent HFA* canister. Remove the protective dust cap from the mouthpiece and check mouthpiece for foreign objects prior to use. You do not have to shake *Atrovent HFA* before using it.	Breathe out fully through your mouth. Holding the inhaler upright (as shown in the picture), place the mouthpiece into your mouth and close your lips around it. Keep your eyes closed so that no medication will be sprayed into your eyes.	While breathing in slowly and deeply through your mouth, press the top of the canister all the way down with your index finger. Hold your breath as long as possible, up to 10 seconds, then breathe out slowly. If another inhalation is needed, wait at least 15 seconds and repeat Steps 1-3. Place cap back on the mouthpiece after use.
TO PRIME Spray 2 times away from the face. Prime again if > 3 days from last use.	**TO CLEAN** Remove the dust cap and metal canister (do not let this get wet) and rinse the mouthpiece under warm running water for 30 seconds. Shake to remove excess water and let air dry. Clean at least weekly.	

Respimat products:

- **Albuterol/ipratropium *(Combivent Respimat)***
- **Olodaterol *(Striverdi Respimat)***
- **Olodaterol/tiotropium *(Stiolto Respimat)***
- **Tiotropium *(Spiriva Respimat)***

STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3
		
Hold the inhaler upright with the cap closed. Turn the clear base in the direction of the arrows on the label until it clicks (half a turn).	Open the cap until it snaps fully open. Turn head away from the inhaler and breathe out slowly and fully.	Close lips around the end of the mouthpiece without covering the air vents. While taking a slow, deep breath through your mouth, press the dose release button and continue to breathe in slowly. Hold your breath as long as possible, up to 10 seconds. Close the cap when finished.

To simplify these steps for patient counseling, think: **TOP**

T	O	P
TURN the clear base	**OPEN** the cap and close your lips around the mouthpiece	**PRESS** the dose-release button and inhale

TO ASSEMBLE DEVICE FOR FIRST USE

With the cap closed, press the safety catch while pulling off the clear base. Do not touch the piercing element located inside the bottom of the clear base. Write the discard by date on the inhaler's label (which is 3 months from the date the cartridge is inserted).

Push the narrow end of the cartridge into the inhaler and push down firmly until it clicks into place. Put the clear base back into place until it clicks. Do not remove the clear base or the cartridge once assembled.

TO PRIME

Hold the inhaler upright with the cap closed. Turn the clear base in the direction of the arrows on the label until it clicks (half a turn). Flip the cap until it snaps fully open.

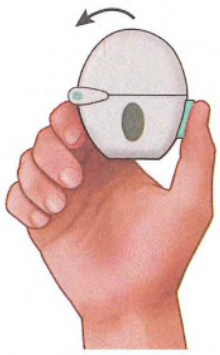
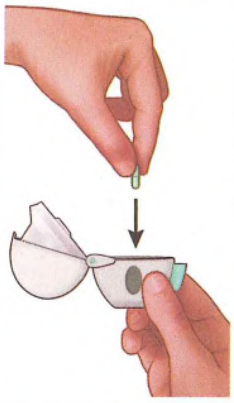
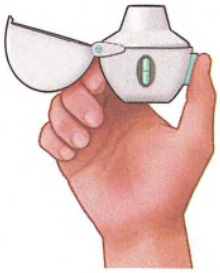
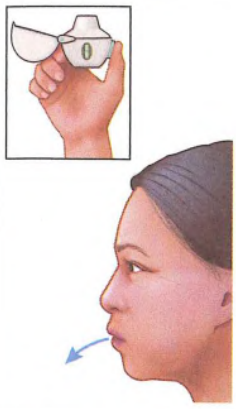
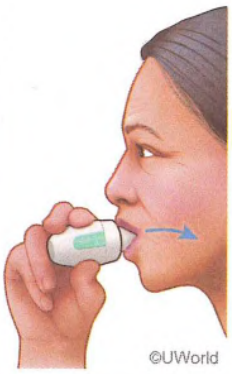
Point the inhaler toward the ground away from your face. Press the dose release button. Close cap. Repeat these steps over again until a spray is visible. Once the spray is visible, repeat the steps 3 more times to make sure the inhaler is prepared for use. If inhaler is not used for > 3 days, release 1 spray toward the ground to prepare the inhaler. If inhaler has not been used for > 21 days, follow priming instructions above for initial use.

TO CLEAN

Clean the mouthpiece, including the metal part inside the mouthpiece, with a damp cloth or tissue weekly.

SELECT DRY POWDER INHALERS

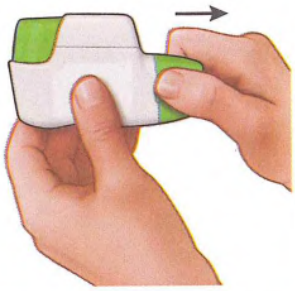
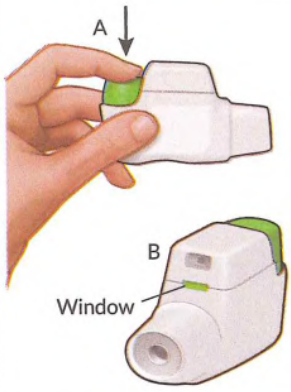
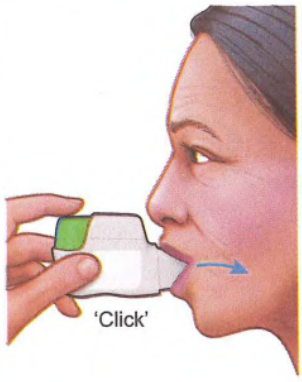
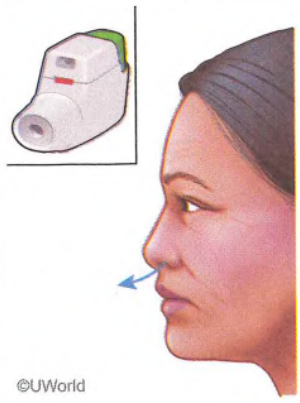
Tiotropium bromide *(Spiriva HandiHaler)*

STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3	STEP 4	STEP 5
				
Open the *HandiHaler* device by pressing on the green button and lifting the cap upwards. Open the mouthpiece by pulling the mouthpiece ridge up and away from the base so the center chamber is showing.	Remove a *Spiriva* capsule from the blister pack and insert it into the chamber (do NOT swallow the capsule). Firmly close the mouthpiece against the gray base until you hear a click.	Press the green piercing button once until it is flat (flush) against the base, then release. Do not shake the device.	Turn head away from the inhaler and breathe out fully.	Raise the *HandiHaler* to your mouth in a horizontal position and close your lips around the mouthpiece. Breathe in deeply and fully. You should hear or feel the *Spiriva* capsule vibrate (rattle). Remove inhaler from your mouth and hold your breath for as long as is comfortable. Breathe normally. To get the full dose, you must inhale twice from each capsule. Repeat steps 4 and 5, breathing out fully, then breathing in deeply and fully through the inhaler. Tip out the used capsule into a trash can after 2 inhalations. Do not touch the capsule. Close the device lid.

TO CLEAN

Clean inhaler monthly, or as needed. Rinse inhaler under warm water. Make sure any powder build-up is removed. Let air dry. It takes 24 hours to air dry the *HandiHaler* device after it is cleaned.

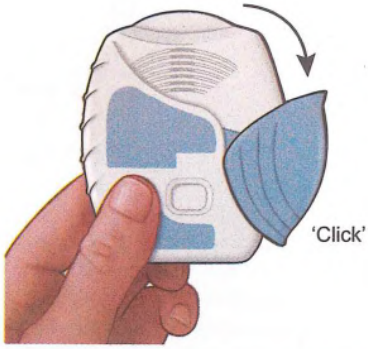
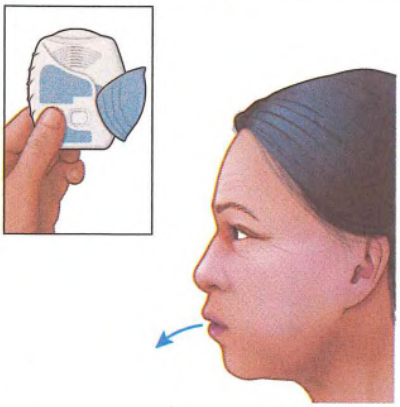
Aclidinium (*Tudorza Pressair*), aclidinium/formoterol (*Duaklir Pressair*)

STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3	STEP 4
			
Remove the protective cap by lightly squeezing the arrows marked on each side of the cap and pulling outwards. Check the mouthpiece for foreign objects.	Hold the inhaler with the mouthpiece facing you and the green button straight above. Before putting into your mouth, press the green button all the way down and release. Check the control window; the dose is ready for inhalation if it changed from red to green. Breathe out completely, away from the inhaler.	Put your lips tightly around the mouthpiece. Breathe in quickly and deeply through your mouth. Breathe in until you hear a "click" sound and keep breathing in to get the full dose. Do not hold down the green button while breathing in.	Remove the inhaler from your mouth and hold your breath for as long as comfortable. Then breathe out slowly away from the inhaler. Place the protective cap on the inhaler. Check that the control window has turned to red which indicates the full dose has been inhaled correctly.

TO CLEAN
Routine cleaning is not required. If needed, wipe the outside of the mouthpiece with a dry tissue or paper towel.

Ellipta products:

- **Fluticasone *(Arnuity Ellipta)***
- **Fluticasone/vilanterol *(Breo Ellipta)***
- **Umeclidinium *(Incruse Ellipta)***
- **Umeclidinium/vilanterol *(Anoro Ellipta)***
- **Umeclidinium/vilanterol/fluticasone *(Trelegy Ellipta)***

STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3
		
Open the cover of the inhaler by sliding the cover down to expose the mouthpiece. You should hear a "click." The counter will count down by 1 number, indicating that the inhaler is ready to use. If you open and close the cover without inhaling the medication, the dose will be lost. It is not possible to accidentally take a double dose or an extra dose in 1 inhalation.	While holding the inhaler away from your mouth, breathe out fully. Do not breathe out into the mouthpiece.	Put the mouthpiece between your lips and close your lips firmly around it. Take one long, steady, deep breath in through your mouth. Do not block the air vent with your fingers. Remove inhaler from mouth and hold your breath for 3-4 seconds or as long as comfortable. Breathe out slowly and gently. Close the inhaler. For ICS products: rinse your mouth with water and spit out the water to prevent thrush.

TO CLEAN
Routine cleaning is not required. If needed, you can clean the mouthpiece using a dry tissue before you close the cover.

Select Guidelines/References

Global Strategy for the Diagnosis, Management, and Prevention of COPD, 2025 Report. Global Initiative for Chronic Obstructive Lung Disease (GOLD). http://www.goldcopd.org (accessed 2024 Dec 3).

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CHAPTER 43

TOBACCO CESSATION

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= Study Tip Gal = Required Formula

BACKGROUND

Smoking is the leading cause of preventable death in the U.S. and a known risk factor for heart disease, stroke, pregnancy complications, multiple cancers, COPD and many other diseases. For some conditions (e.g., lung cancer), disease risk is related to an individual's pack-year smoking history, which can be calculated using the formula below.

Pack-year smoking history	=	cigarette packs / day × years smoked

Example: a patient who has smoked 2 packs per day (i.e., 40 cigarettes) for 10 years has a 20 pack-year smoking history.

Tobacco use disorder is a chronic disease that occurs because nicotine activates nicotinic receptors, resulting in dopamine release and activation of the dopamine reward system (i.e., pleasurable effects). This promotes continued (and increased) smoking (i.e., dependency) and when smoking is abruptly stopped, the patient experiences cravings and withdrawal symptoms (e.g., irritability, restlessness, insomnia, anxiety, depression, poor concentration).

TREATMENT PRINCIPLES

Quitting smoking is difficult, often requiring repeated interventions and multiple quit attempts. It is essential to ask patients about tobacco use, document the response and provide effective treatments (see the "5 A's" Model).

THE "5 A's" MODEL FOR TREATING TOBACCO USE AND DEPENDENCE

Ask about tobacco use
Document tobacco use status at each patient visit.

Advise to quit
Use clear, personalized language to advise the patient to quit tobacco use.

Assess readiness to quit
If unwilling, provide motivational intervention to encourage a future quit attempt. If willing, provide assistance.

Assist with quit attempt
Provide counseling and/or refer to behavioral therapy; recommend pharmacologic treatment, if appropriate.

Arrange follow up
Monitor progress.

Behavioral therapy independently increases the chances of successfully quitting smoking and is an essential component of tobacco cessation treatment. Effective methods include counseling (e.g., individual or group, in-person or via telephone), social support and self-help resources (e.g., automated motivational text messages, audio recordings).

Useful online and telephone resources for patients and healthcare professionals include 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669), smokefree.gov and Million Hearts® Tobacco Cessation Change Package (available at millionhearts.hhs.gov).

Most patients require pharmacotherapy to reduce withdrawal symptoms and the urge to smoke. The combination of counseling and pharmacotherapy is more effective than using either strategy alone.

EXCEPTIONS TO DRUG TREATMENT

Behavioral counseling alone is preferred for the following patient populations due to limited evidence regarding the safety or effectiveness of smoking cessation medications: pregnant females, adolescents and "light" smokers (e.g., < 10 cigarettes per day).

ALTERNATIVE NICOTINE SOURCES

Nicotine pouches and electronic nicotine delivery systems (e.g., e-cigarettes, vapes) provide nicotine without exposing the patient to the other harmful substances in cigarettes. However, they are not indicated for smoking cessation due to limited data regarding efficacy and concerns about safety, such as the risk of e-cigarette– or vaping product use–associated lung injury (EVALI) with electronic products.

SMOKING AND DRUG INTERACTIONS

The non-nicotine chemicals in tobacco smoke induce CYP450 enzymes, primarily CYP450 1A2. Smokers who quit no longer have CYP1A2 induction and, as a result, can experience side effects from supratherapeutic levels of theophylline, fluvoxamine, olanzapine, clozapine and the R-isomer (less potent isomer) of warfarin.

Estrogen-containing oral contraceptives should be avoided in patients ≥ 35 years of age who smoke due to an increased risk of cardiovascular events (e.g., stroke, myocardial infarction).

VACCINATIONS IN SMOKERS

Smokers age 19 – 49 years old should receive a pneumococcal vaccine, an annual influenza vaccine and all age-appropriate vaccines (see the Immunizations chapter).

DRUG TREATMENT

Preferred drug treatment options for smoking cessation include:

- Combination nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) with the long-acting nicotine patch (which provides a consistent level of nicotine) and short-acting gum, lozenge or nasal spray (which can be used as needed to control breakthrough cravings).
- Varenicline monotherapy.

These options are more effective than NRT monotherapy or bupropion SR. Both varenicline and bupropion SR can be used in combination with NRT; varenicline plus NRT is more effective than varenicline monotherapy but due to an increased risk of adverse effects, this option is typically reserved for patients who fail initial pharmacologic treatment.

The Study Tip Gal below describes reasons to consider using or avoiding specific treatments based on patient-specific characteristics or preferences.

TREATMENT CONSIDERATIONS FOR TOBACCO CESSATION

DELAY WEIGHT GAIN	DEPRESSION	DENTURES	ASTHMA/COPD	SKIN CONDITIONS	SEIZURES
Use Gum, lozenge or bupropion SR	**Use** Bupropion SR	**Avoid** Gum	**Avoid** Nasal spray	**Avoid** Patch	**Avoid** Bupropion **Use caution** Varenicline

NICOTINE REPLACEMENT THERAPY (NRT)

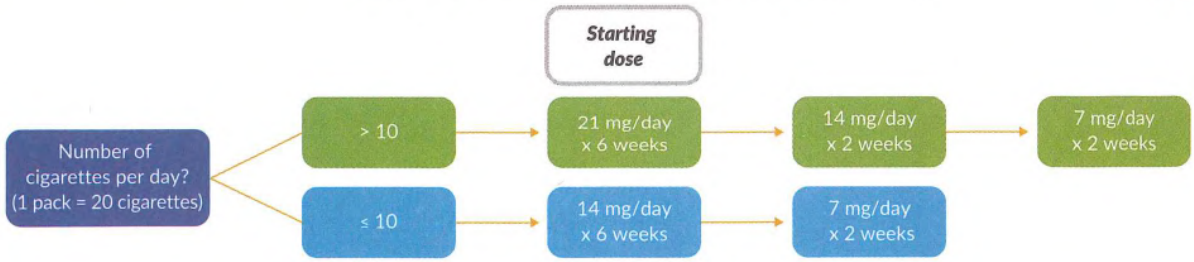
NRT provides nicotine without the use of tobacco; this helps to ease withdrawal symptoms and increases the chances of successfully quitting smoking.

DRUG*	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Nicotine patch ***(NicoDerm CQ,*** others) OTC	Initial dose is based on the number of cigarettes smoked per day See Study Tip Gal below	**WARNINGS** Avoid in immediate post-MI period, life-threatening arrhythmias, severe or worsening angina and pregnancy** Nasal spray: avoid in asthma, COPD and chronic nasal disorders (e.g., allergic rhinitis, polyps)
Nicotine gum ***(Nicorette,*** others) OTC **Nicotine lozenge** ***(Nicorette Mini,*** others) OTC	Initial dose is based on the timing of the first cigarette smoked upon waking See Study Tip Gal below	**SIDE EFFECTS** Insomnia, headache, dizziness, nervousness, dyspepsia Patch: vivid dreams, skin irritation Gum/lozenge: hiccups, nausea, mouth irritation Nasal spray: nasal irritation, watery eyes, sneezing, transient changes in taste and smell
Nicotine nasal spray *(Nicotrol NS)* Rx	1 dose = 1 spray in each nostril; use 1-2 doses per hour, ↑ PRN for symptom relief Min: 8 doses/day Max: 5 doses/hr or 40 doses/day Use up to 3 months	**NOTES** The FDA prohibits sale of nicotine products to individuals < 21 years of age; identification is required to purchase Patch: highest adherence rate; remove before an MRI Gum and lozenge (sugar-free): 4 mg strength can reduce or delay weight gain; acidic beverages/foods ↓ buccal absorption, do not eat/drink 15 minutes before or during use

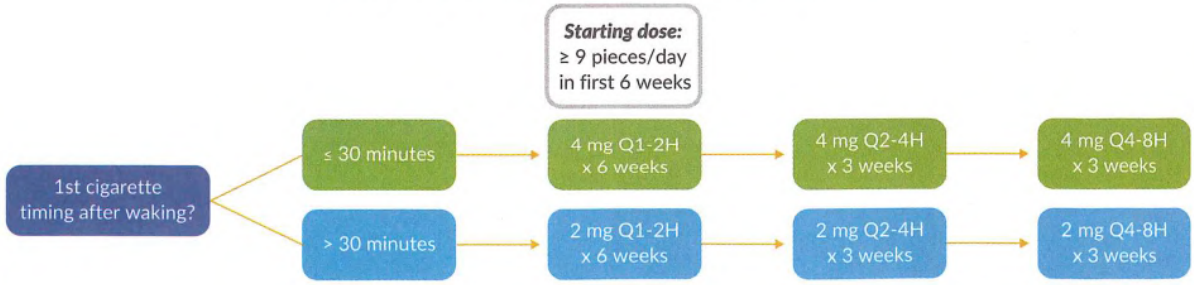
**Nicotine inhaler is no longer available in the U.S.*
***Package labeling warns of NRT use in these situations, but in practice the decision is based on comparing the risks of smoking to the potential risks of NRT.*

NICOTINE PATCH, GUM AND LOZENGE DOSING

Nicotine patch dosing: 8 - 10 week schedule



Nicotine gum/lozenge dosing: 12-week schedule



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BUPROPION

Bupropion blocks neuronal reuptake of dopamine and norepinephrine, resulting in reduced cravings and withdrawal symptoms. Bupropion should be started before the quit date to allow time for it to reach steady state before stopping smoking; it does not need to be tapered when it is discontinued.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Bupropion SR Tablet For depression: ***Wellbutrin SR, Wellbutrin XL,*** *Aplenzin, Forfivo XL,* bupropion IR For seasonal affective disorder: ***Wellbutrin XL,*** *Aplenzin*	Start 1-2 weeks before quit date SR: 150 mg QAM for 3 days, then 150 mg BID Max dose: 300 mg/day Adjust dose for renal and hepatic impairment Use up to 6 months	**BOXED WARNING** Increased risk of suicidal thinking and behavior in children, adolescents and young adults taking antidepressants **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Seizures, anorexia/bulimia, use with MAO inhibitors, linezolid or IV methylene blue; abrupt discontinuation of alcohol or sedatives **WARNINGS** Serious neuropsychiatric events (e.g., mood changes, hallucinations, paranoia, aggression, anxiety), activation of mania/hypomania, hypertension, angle-closure glaucoma, rash (including SJS) **SIDE EFFECTS** Dry mouth, insomnia, tremors, weight loss, tachycardia, headache, sweating, nausea/vomiting, constipation **NOTES** Do not use with other forms of bupropion (see Depression chapter) Take the 1st dose upon waking and the 2nd dose at least 8 hours after the 1st dose (decreases the risk of seizures and minimizes insomnia by avoiding bedtime dosing) If no significant progress by week 7, consider discontinuation

VARENICLINE

Varenicline is a partial neuronal alpha-4 beta-2 nicotinic receptor agonist. It causes low-level nicotine receptor stimulation while also preventing nicotine from binding. This reduces withdrawal symptoms and inhibits dopamine surges that are responsible for the reinforcement and reward associated with smoking. Similar to bupropion, varenicline should be started before the quit date to allow time for it to reach therapeutic effects before smoking is ceased; it does not need to be tapered when it is discontinued.

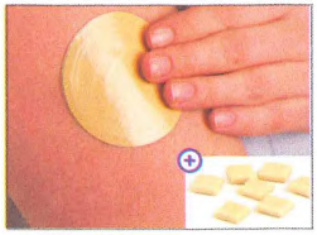
DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Varenicline *(APO-Varenicline)* Tablet Starter pack available with 0.5 mg tablets (11) and 1 mg tablets (42) *Tyrvaya* - nasal spray for dry eyes	Start 1 week before quit date Days 1-3: 0.5 mg daily Days 4-7: 0.5 mg BID Day 8 (quit date) and beyond: 1 mg BID CrCl < 30 mL/min: 0.5 mg daily titrated to max 0.5 mg BID Use for 12 weeks; can use another 12 weeks to maintain success	**WARNINGS** Serious neuropsychiatric events (e.g., agitation, depression, suicidal thoughts/behaviors), seizures, ↑ effects of alcohol, sleepwalking, accidental injury (e.g., traffic accidents), CVD risk, hypersensitivity reactions (e.g., angioedema, SJS) **SIDE EFFECTS** Nausea (~30%, dose-dependent), insomnia, vivid dreams, headache, constipation, vomiting **NOTES** To ↓ nausea, take after eating with a full glass of water; can reduce dose if needed To ↓ insomnia, take 2nd dose earlier than bedtime or reduce/eliminate 2nd dose If unable to abruptly quit smoking on day 8, decrease smoking by 50% in the first 4 weeks, an additional 50% in weeks 5-8, with complete cessation by week 12

KEY COUNSELING POINTS

See the Drug Formulations and Patient Counseling chapter for counseling language/layman's terminology.

NICOTINE PATCH ADMINISTRATION

- At the start of each day, remove a new patch from the pouch; save the pouch to throw away used patches.
- Remove the backing and apply the sticky side of the patch to a clean, dry and relatively hairless area of the skin; press the patch firmly onto the skin for ~10 seconds.
- Wear for 24 hours. If vivid dreams or trouble sleeping occur, remove the patch prior to bedtime (after about 16 hours) and apply a new one in the morning.
- To discard the patch, fold the sticky ends together, place it back in the pouch and put it in a trash can with a lid to keep away from children and pets.
- Wash your hands after applying (and removing) the patch.
- Rotate the application site; do not apply to the same site for at least one week. Skin reactions can occur but generally go away in a few days.
- Never cut the patch or wear more than one patch at a time.



Use gum or lozenges to help with cravings while using the patch
iStock.com/Daniel Heighton
Bert Folsom/stock.adobe.com

HOW TO CHEW NICOTINE GUM

- Chew slowly until there is a tingle or peppery flavor in the mouth.
- Park it between the cheek and gum.
- When the tingle or flavor goes away, chew the gum slowly again until it returns, then park it again.
- Repeat until most of the flavor or tingle is gone (~30 minutes).
- Do not eat or drink 15 minutes before or during use.

NICOTINE LOZENGE

- Do not eat or drink for 15 minutes before or during use.
- Do not chew or swallow. Move the lozenge from one side of the mouth to the other, allowing it to completely dissolve slowly (takes 20 – 30 minutes).
- May cause a warm or tingling sensation.
- Do not use more than one lozenge at a time or continuously use one lozenge after another.

NICOTINE NASAL SPRAY

- Tilt the head back slightly and spray once in each nostril while breathing through the mouth. Do not sniff, swallow or inhale through the nose.
- Can cause sneezing, coughing, watery eyes, runny nose and a hot peppery feeling in the back of the throat.

BUPROPION

- Start taking 1 – 2 weeks before desired quit date.
- Can cause:
  - ☐ Suicidal ideation.
  - ☐ Insomnia (avoid near bedtime).
- Do not use if you have a seizure disorder, anorexia or bulimia.

VARENICLINE

- Start taking 1 week before desired quit date.
- Can cause:
  - ☐ Suicidal ideation or depression.
  - ☐ Insomnia.
  - ☐ Nausea.

Select Guidelines/References

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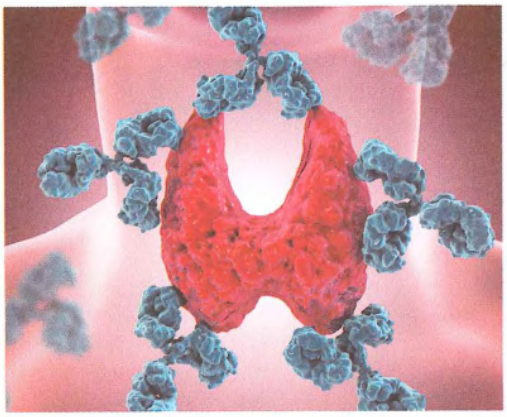
ENDOCRINE CONDITIONS



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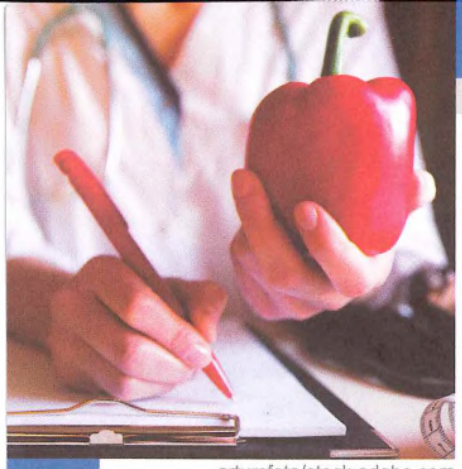

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ENDOCRINE CONDITIONS

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DIABETES

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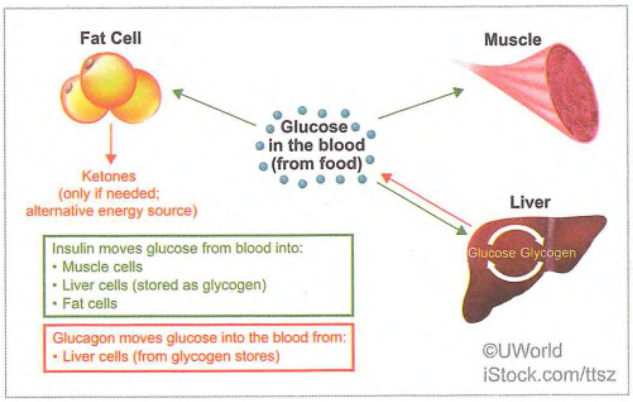
= Study Tip Gal = Key Drugs Guy = Required Formula

BACKGROUND

Diabetes is a common condition in the United States, affecting > 35 million Americans (just over 1 in 10). The primary problem in patients with diabetes is hyperglycemia [i.e., elevated blood glucose (BG)] due to decreased insulin secretion from the pancreas, reduced insulin sensitivity (i.e., how responsive cells are to insulin) or both. Chronic hyperglycemia can lead to other complications, including organ and nerve damage.

Insulin is a hormone produced by beta-cells (also called islet cells) in the pancreas. It is responsible for moving glucose out of the blood and into body cells for use as energy. Glucose is primarily moved to muscle cells for immediate use, or it is stored by liver cells (as glycogen, the quick glucose reserve) or adipose (fat) cells for later use.

Insulin is counter-balanced by glucagon; they have opposite effects, as shown in the diagram below. Glucagon is produced by alpha-cells in the pancreas and causes the release of glucose from glycogen when BG is low. If glycogen is depleted, glucagon will signal fat cells to make ketones as an alternative energy source.



TYPES OF DIABETES

TYPE 1 DIABETES

Type 1 diabetes (T1D) accounts for ~5 – 10% of all cases. It is caused by the autoimmune destruction of beta-cells in the pancreas. Once beta-cells are destroyed, insulin cannot be produced. Without insulin, glucose cannot be used by muscle cells for energy. The body goes into starvation mode and starts to metabolize fat into ketones as an alternative energy source. Because ketones are acidic, high ketone levels can cause diabetic ketoacidosis (DKA), which is a medical emergency (discussed later in this chapter).

Most T1D is diagnosed in children, but it can develop at any age. Family history is the biggest risk factor. It can be difficult to distinguish between T1D and type 2 diabetes (T2D), especially early in the disease; testing for islet autoantibodies (an autoimmune marker) and C-peptide (a substance released by the pancreas only when insulin is released) can help differentiate between T1D and T2D. The C-peptide level is very low or absent (undetectable) in T1D.

Patients with T1D must be treated with insulin and should be screened for other autoimmune disorders (e.g., thyroid disorders, celiac disease). Teplizumab *(Tzield)* is a monoclonal antibody that is FDA-approved to delay the onset of symptomatic disease in patients with T1D.

TYPE 2 DIABETES

T2D accounts for ~90 – 95% of all cases and is due to both insulin resistance (decreased insulin sensitivity) and relative insulin deficiency. The pancreatic beta-cells produce less insulin over time as they become damaged, and hyperglycemia develops gradually, which is why the onset of T2D often goes unnoticed. T2D is strongly associated with obesity, physical inactivity, family history and other comorbid conditions (see Risk Factors section). T2D is usually diagnosed in older patients and can be managed with lifestyle modifications alone (in a small number of patients) or in combination with oral and/or injectable medications.

PREDIABETES

Prediabetes means there is an increased risk of developing diabetes; the BG is higher than normal, but not high enough for a diabetes diagnosis. Following dietary and exercise recommendations reduces the risk of progression from prediabetes to diabetes.

Metformin can be used to help improve BG levels, especially in patients with a BMI ≥ 35 kg/m^2, age 25 – 59 years and women with a history of gestational diabetes mellitus. Annual screening for diabetes and treatment of modifiable cardiovascular disease (CVD) risk factors is recommended.

DIABETES IN PREGNANCY

There are two types of diabetes in pregnant patients:

- Diabetes is present prior to becoming pregnant, or
- Diabetes develops during pregnancy [gestational diabetes mellitus (GDM)], typically in the second or third trimester

BG goals in pregnant patients are more stringent than in the non-pregnant population (see Glycemic Targets in Diabetes Study Tip Gal on the next page). Hyperglycemia during pregnancy can cause an infant to be larger than normal (macrosomia) and increases the risk (in both the mother and the baby) of developing obesity and diabetes later in life.

Most pregnant women are tested for GDM at 24 – 28 weeks gestation using the oral glucose tolerance test (OGTT) (see Diagnosis section). Hyperglycemia, if present, should be treated with lifestyle modifications first (diet and exercise). If medication is needed, insulin is preferred. Metformin and glyburide are not recommended but are sometimes used.

SCREENING & DIAGNOSIS

RISK FACTORS

Major risk factors that increase the likelihood of prediabetes and T2D include:

- Age
- Physical inactivity
- Overweight (BMI ≥ 25 kg/m^2 or ≥ 23 kg/m^2 in Asian-Americans)
- High-risk race or ethnicity: African-American, Asian-American, Latino/Hispanic-American, Native American or Pacific Islander
- History of gestational diabetes
- A1C ≥ 5.7% (i.e., prediabetes)
- First-degree relative with diabetes (sibling or parent)
- HDL < 35 mg/dL and/or TG > 250 mg/dL
- Hypertension (BP ≥ 130/80 mmHg or controlled with medication)
- CVD history or smoking history
- Conditions that cause insulin resistance [e.g., acanthosis nigricans, polycystic ovary syndrome, metabolic dysfunction-associated steatotic liver disease (MASLD)]

SYMPTOMS

The classic symptoms of hyperglycemia include:

- Polyuria (excessive urination)
- Polyphagia (excessive hunger or increased appetite)
- Polydipsia (excessive thirst)

Other symptoms include fatigue, blurry vision and weight loss. In T1D, the initial presentation is often DKA due to the total insulin deficiency.

SCREENING

All patients, even those without risk factors, should be tested beginning at age 35 years.

In addition, asymptomatic adults who are overweight (BMI ≥ 25 kg/m^2 or ≥ 23 kg/m^2 in Asian-Americans) or obese with at least one other risk factor (e.g., physical inactivity) should be screened.

If the result is normal, repeat testing is recommended at least once every 3 years.

Other patients that warrant screening include those taking drugs that increase blood glucose (see Drugs that Affect Blood Glucose Key Drugs Guy later in the chapter) and those with HIV or pancreatitis.

DIAGNOSIS

There are three types of tests used to identify if prediabetes or diabetes is present:

1. Hemoglobin A1C (or simply A1C) reflects the average BG in the past 3 months (approximately).
2. Plasma glucose (either random or fasting) indicates the BG at that moment. Fasting plasma glucose (FPG) requires that the patient has fasted for ≥ 8 hours.
3. An OGTT determines how well glucose is tolerated by measuring the BG level 2 hours after drinking a liquid that is high in sugar (glucose).

The criteria for diagnosing diabetes are shown in the Study Tip Gal on the next page. No single test is preferred. A single positive test should be confirmed with a second abnormal test result from either the same sample or a new sample, unless there is a clear clinical diagnosis (e.g., classic symptoms of hyperglycemia plus a random BG ≥ 200 mg/dL).

DIAGNOSTIC CRITERIA FOR DIABETES

	A1C (%)	FPG (mg/dL)	Random BG (mg/dL)	OGTT, 2-hr BG (mg/dL)
Diabetes	≥ 6.5	≥ 126	≥ 200*	≥ 200
Prediabetes	5.7-6.4	100-125		140-199

**In addition to classic symptoms of hyperglycemia.*

TREATMENT GOALS

The treatment goals for A1C, preprandial glucose (measured before meals) and postprandial glucose (PPG, measured after eating) are shown in the Study Tip Gal below.

GLYCEMIC TARGETS IN DIABETES

	A1C (%)	Preprandial (mg/dL)	1-hr PPG (mg/dL)	2-hr PPG (mg/dL)
Not Pregnant	< 7*	80-130		< 180
Pregnant		< 95	< 140	< 120

**A lower A1C goal may be acceptable if it can be reached without significant hypoglycemia. A less-stringent goal of < 8% may be appropriate (e.g., patient has risks for severe hypoglycemia or a limited life-expectancy).*

Typically, the A1C is measured with a blood sample sent to a lab. Point-of-care A1C test kits provide immediate results and can be used to assess blood glucose control (but are not typically recommended for diagnosis). Fructosamine is an alternative method of evaluating glycemic control when an A1C cannot be used (e.g., sickle cell disease); it reflects glycemic status over the past 2 – 4 weeks.

Patients can measure their own BG using a glucose meter or a continuous glucose monitoring (CGM) device (discussed later in the chapter).

TESTING FREQUENCY

Glycemic control (e.g., A1C, time in range) should be assessed:

- Quarterly (every 3 months) if not meeting goals
- Biannually (every 6 months, or twice per year) if at goal

INTERPRETING THE A1C WITH THE eAG

It can be difficult to understand how an A1C value correlates with BG values measured on a glucose meter. The estimated average glucose (eAG) is an interpretation of the A1C value:

- An A1C of 6% equates to an eAG of 126 mg/dL.
- Each additional 1% increase in the A1C increases the eAG by ~28 mg/dL.

Example: an A1C of 7% means eAG is ~154 mg/dL (126 + 28).

LIFESTYLE MODIFICATIONS

WEIGHT MANAGEMENT

- Monitor weight parameters (e.g., actual body weight, BMI, waist circumference) annually.
- If overweight or obese, set a weight loss goal of at least 3 – 7% of body weight (for some, 10 – 15% is recommended). Medications and/or surgery may be needed (see the Weight Loss chapter).

INDIVIDUALIZED MEDICAL NUTRITION THERAPY

- Consume natural forms of carbohydrates and sugars (i.e., from vegetables, fruits, whole grains, legumes, dairy) and lean protein.
- Limit alcohol consumption (≤ 1 drink/day for women, ≤ 2 drinks/day for men).
- Patients with T1D should count carbohydrates and adjust prandial (mealtime) insulin doses based on carbohydrate intake. A carbohydrate serving is 15 grams (e.g., one small piece of fruit, 1 slice of bread or 1/3 cup of cooked rice/pasta)

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

- Perform at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity per week spread over at least 3 days.
- Reduce sedentary time (i.e., long hours of sitting) by standing every 30 minutes, at a minimum.

SMOKING CESSATION

Encourage all patients who smoke to quit; this includes tobacco, e-cigarettes and cannabis.

NATURAL PRODUCTS

Although evidence is limited, some patients use natural products for T2D. Products commonly used to decrease BG include cinnamon, alpha lipoic acid, chromium, magnesium and ginseng. Most patients will still require the use of prescription medications.

COMPREHENSIVE CARE

In addition to glycemic control, treatment of diabetes is aimed at preventing long-term complications. Left untreated, diabetes damages nearly all parts of the body. Complications are categorized as microvascular (small vessel) or macrovascular (large vessel) diseases, as shown in the Study Tip Gal below.

DIABETES COMPLICATIONS

Microvascular Disease
Retinopathy

Diabetic kidney disease (i.e., nephropathy)

Peripheral neuropathy (i.e., loss of sensation, often in the feet), ↑ risk of foot infections and amputations

Autonomic neuropathy (gastroparesis, loss of bladder control, erectile dysfunction)

Macrovascular Disease*
Coronary artery disease (CAD), including MI

Cerebrovascular disease, including stroke (CVA)

Peripheral artery disease (PAD)

**Macrovascular disease is the same as atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease (ASCVD).*

Diabetes is the leading cause of lower-extremity amputations, kidney disease and blindness. The primary cause of death is cardiovascular disease, which is twice as likely to occur in patients with diabetes compared to the general population.

The American Diabetes Association (ADA) provides recommendations for monitoring, preventing and treating complications of uncontrolled diabetes (see the diagram on the next page).

FOOT CARE COUNSELING

Counseling on proper foot care is essential for patients with diabetes because they may not be able to feel damage or injury to their feet. Patients should be instructed to wash, dry and examine their feet daily, and to moisturize the top and bottom of their feet (but not between the toes). They should wear socks and shoes, elevate the feet when sitting and trim their toenails with a nail file (to avoid sharp edges from a clipper).

The patient's feet should also be examined at each office visit, and they should have an annual foot exam performed by a podiatrist.

Antiplatelet Therapy (Aspirin)

- Aspirin 75-162 mg/day (usually 81 mg/day) is recommended for ASCVD secondary prevention (e.g., post-MI).
  - Salicylate allergy: use clopidogrel 75 mg/day.
- Not recommended for primary prevention (most patients); the risk of bleeding is about equal to the benefit. Consider only if high risk.
- CAD/PAD: aspirin + low-dose rivaroxaban can be added.
- Used during pregnancy to ↓ risk of preeclampsia.

Diabetic Retinopathy

- T2D: eye exam with dilation at diagnosis.
  - If retinopathy present, repeat testing annually. If not, repeat every 1-2 years.

Vaccinations

Recommended, in addition to all age-appropriate vaccines:

- Hepatitis B virus (HBV) series.
- Influenza annually.
- Pneumococcal, COVID-19 and RSV vaccines per ACIP guidelines (see Immunizations chapter).

Neuropathy

- Monitored annually with a 10-g monofilament test or Ipswich touch test and 1 other test (e.g., pinprick, temperature, vibration) to assess sensation.
- Comprehensive foot exam performed at least annually. If high-risk, refer to a podiatrist.
- Treatment options: gabapentin, pregabalin, SNRIs (e.g., duloxetine), tricyclic antidepressants or sodium channel blockers.

Bone Health

- Monitor bone mineral density with a DXA every 2-3 yrs if age ≥ 65 (or earlier if risk factors are present).
- Consider treatment if T-score ≤ −2.0 or fragility fracture.

See Osteoporosis, Menopause & Testosterone Use chapter for details on treatment options.

Cholesterol Control

Statin Treatment in Patients with Diabetes*

- High-intensity statin** for:
  - Comorbid ASCVD; LDL goal < 55 mg/dL.
  - Age 40-75 years with ≥ 1 ASCVD risk factor; LDL goal < 70 mg/dL.
- Moderate-intensity statin for:
  - Age 40-75 years (no ASCVD).
  - Age 20-39 years with ASCVD risk factors.

Add-On Treatment (to Maximally Tolerated Statin)

- Ezetimibe or a PCSK9 inhibitor if LDL remains above goal.
- Icosapent ethyl *(Vascepa)* if LDL is controlled but TGs are 150-499 mg/dL in patients with ASCVD or risk factors.

Check lipid panel at statin initiation, 4-12 weeks after initiation, after dose changes, and then annually.

**Statin alternatives (if intolerant): bempedoic acid or PCSK9 inhibitor.*
***Atorvastatin 40-80 mg or rosuvastatin 20-40 mg daily.*

Diabetic Kidney Disease

- Defined as eGFR < 60 mL/min/1.73 m^2 and/or albuminuria (urine albumin ≥ 30 mg/24 hrs or UACR ≥ 30 mg/g).
- Monitor urinary albumin and eGFR annually if normal kidney function.*

Treatments to Delay CKD Progression

- ACE inhibitor or ARB.
- SGLT2 inhibitor (if eGFR ≥ 20 mL/min/1.73 m^2).**
- GLP-1 agonist.**
- Finerenone (add to maximally tolerated dose of an ACE inhibitor or ARB).

UACR = urine albumin-to-creatinine ratio.
**More frequent monitoring (e.g., 2-4 times a year, based on stage of disease) is recommended in patients with CKD.*
***See Treatment Algorithm on next page for details.*

Blood Pressure Control

- BP goal: < 130/80 mmHg

Treatment

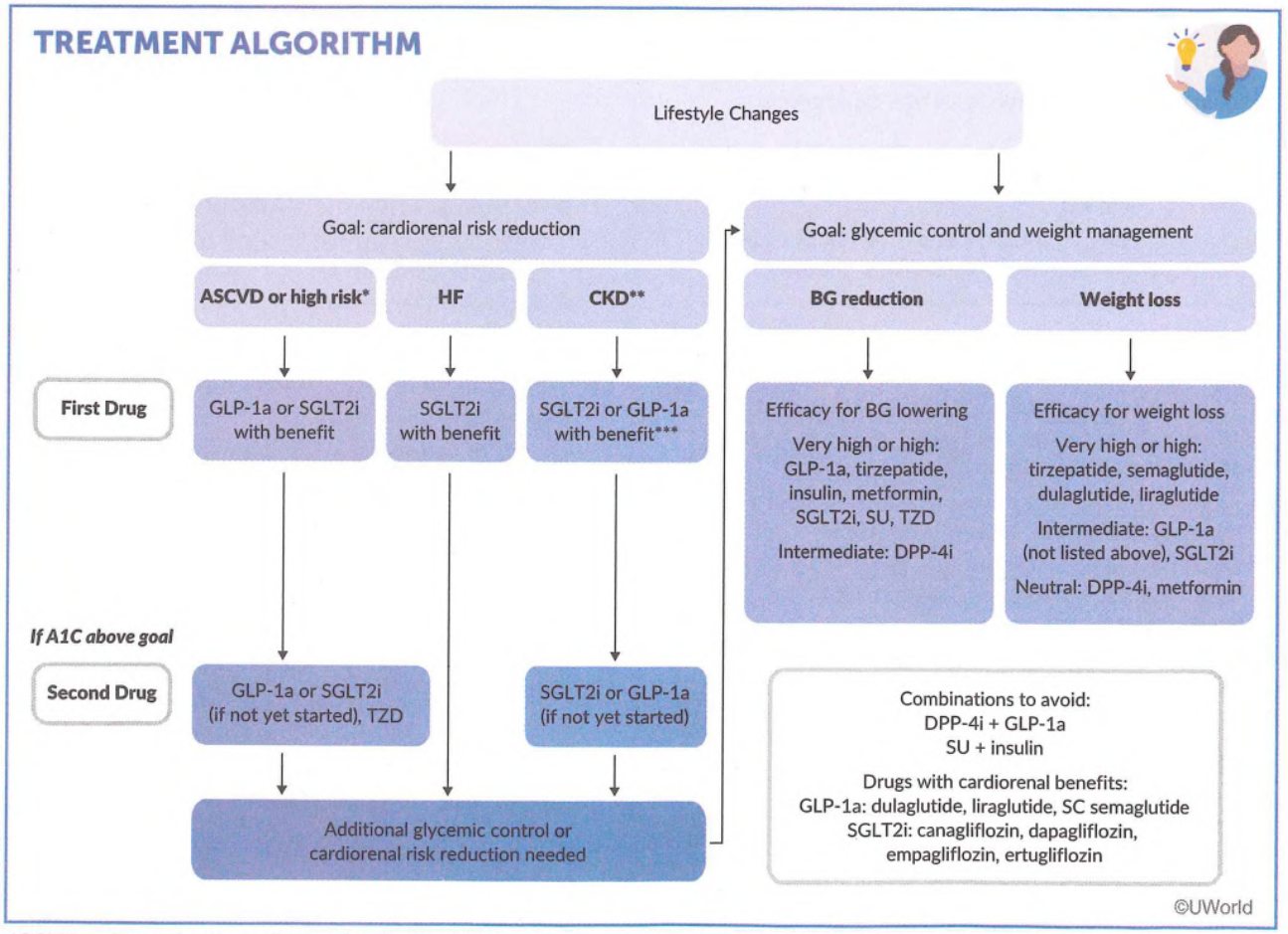
- No albuminuria or CAD: thiazide, DHP CCB, ACE inhibitor or ARB.
- Albuminuria or CAD: ACE inhibitor or ARB.

TREATMENT FOR TYPE 2 DIABETES

The goals of treatment are to maintain BG levels in the target range (while avoiding hypoglycemia) and to reduce long-term complications of hyperglycemia. The ADA guidelines provide recommendations for initial treatment and add-on therapy (summarized below in the Study Tip Gal). Initial treatment depends on comorbidities and patient-specific factors.

- Start a GLP-1 agonist or SGLT2 inhibitor with proven benefit at baseline if the patient has ASCVD, heart failure or chronic kidney disease.
- Start two drugs at baseline if A1C is 8.5 – 10%.
- Insulin can be used initially in patients with severe hyperglycemia (A1C > 10% or BG ≥ 300 mg/dL), evidence of catabolism (e.g., weight loss) or hyperglycemic symptoms (e.g., polyuria, polydipsia); see Insulin section. Outside of these scenarios, if injectable medications are needed for A1C lowering, GLP-1 agonists or GLP-1/GIP agonists are preferred over insulin.
- Add medications if the A1C remains above goal. Treatment is determined by patient-specific factors (e.g., glycemic efficacy, effect on weight, cost, risk of hypoglycemia).
  - ☐ Do not use a DPP-4 inhibitor and GLP-1 agonist together (overlapping mechanisms).
  - ☐ Do not use a sulfonylurea and insulin together (high risk of hypoglycemia).

TREATMENT ALGORITHM



ASCVD = atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease, HF = heart failure, CKD = chronic kidney disease, BG = blood glucose, GLP-1a = glucagon-like peptide 1 receptor agonist, SGLT2i = sodium-glucose cotransporter 2 inhibitor, TZD = thiazolidinedione, SU = sulfonylurea, DPP-4i = dipeptidyl peptidase 4 inhibitor.

**High risk: age ≥ 55 with two or more additional risk factors (e.g., obesity, hypertension, smoking, dyslipidemia, albuminuria).*

***Defined as eGFR < 60 mL/min/1.73 m^2 and/or urine albumin ≥ 30 mg/24 hr.*

****SGLT2i recommended if eGFR ≥ 20 mL/min/1.73 m^2 at initiation, though glycemic efficacy is reduced at eGFR < 45 mL/min/1.73 m^2; continue until dialysis or transplant.*

NON-INSULIN MEDICATIONS FOR TYPE 2 DIABETES

GLUCAGON-LIKE PEPTIDE 1 (GLP-1) AND GLUCOSE-DEPENDENT INSULINOTROPIC POLYPEPTIDE (GIP) AGONISTS

Glucagon-like peptide 1 (GLP-1) agonists are analogs of the incretin hormone GLP-1, which ↑ glucose-dependent insulin secretion, ↓ glucagon secretion, slows gastric emptying, improves satiety and causes weight loss. Glucose-dependent insulinotropic polypeptide (GIP) agonists have similar effects.

Liraglutide, dulaglutide and SC semaglutide are recommended in patients with T2D and ASCVD (or high risk) or CKD because of their demonstrated benefits. In addition, patients with or without T2D may be prescribed a GLP-1 agonist for chronic weight management (target doses can differ) or to treat metabolic dysfunction-associated steatohepatitis (MASH). GLP-1 and GLP-1/GIP agonists are all subcutaneous injections, except semaglutide which also comes as an oral tablet, and have generic names that end in "-tide."

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
GLP-1 Agonists		**BOXED WARNING** All (except *Byetta):* risk of thyroid C-cell carcinomas; do not use if personal or family history of medullary thyroid carcinoma (MTC) or with Multiple Endocrine Neoplasia syndrome type 2 (MEN 2) **WARNINGS** Pancreatitis (can be fatal; risk factors: gallstones, ↑ TGs or alcoholism), acute kidney injury, gallbladder disease Use with caution in patients with severe GI diseases, including gastroparesis (has not been studied) Increased risk of pulmonary aspiration (due to delayed gastric emptying) during general anesthesia/deep sedation *Bydureon BCise:* serious injection-site reactions (e.g., abscess, cellulitis, necrosis) with or without SC nodules *Ozempic, Trulicity, Mounjaro:* ↑ diabetic retinopathy complications **SIDE EFFECTS** Weight loss, nausea/vomiting/diarrhea, hypoglycemia, injection site reactions Tirzepatide: increased heart rate **NOTES** ↓ A1C 0.5-1.5%; ↓ postprandial BG, low hypoglycemia risk (unless used with insulin) *Byetta:* give dose within 60 minutes before meals; *Rybelsus:* take ≥ 30 minutes before first food/drink Pen needles are not provided with *Byetta* or *Victoza* Glucose lowering may not be seen with initial doses (which are low and titrated to reduce GI side effects) Exenatide is on the NIOSH list
Liraglutide *(Victoza)* ***Saxenda*** – for weight loss	0.6 mg SC daily × 1 week, then ↑ to 1.2 mg SC daily Max: 1.8 mg SC daily	
Dulaglutide *(Trulicity)*	0.75 mg SC once weekly Max: 4.5 mg SC weekly	
Semaglutide *(Ozempic* – SC, *Rybelsus* – oral) ***Wegovy*** – for weight loss	SC: 0.25 mg SC once weekly × 4 weeks, then ↑ to 0.5 mg SC weekly Max: 2 mg SC weekly PO: 3 mg PO daily × 30 days, then ↑ to 7 mg daily Max: 14 mg PO daily	
Exenatide *(Byetta)*	5 mcg SC BID for 1 month Max: 10 mcg SC BID CrCl < 30: not recommended	
Exenatide ER *(Bydureon BCise)*	2 mg SC once weekly eGFR < 45: not recommended	
Dual GLP-1 and GIP Agonist ("twincretin")		
Tirzepatide *(Mounjaro)* ***Zepbound*** – for weight loss	2.5 mg SC weekly × 4 weeks, then ↑ to 5 mg SC weekly Max: 15 mg SC weekly	

eGFR units: mL/min/1.73 m^2, CrCl units: mL/min.

GLP-1 AGONIST DRUG INTERACTIONS

- The slowed gastric emptying with GLP-1 agonists can ↓ the absorption of other drugs. Use caution with NTI drugs or drugs that require threshold concentrations for efficacy (e.g., antibiotics, oral contraceptives).
  - ☐ Tirzepatide*:* use a non-oral or barrier method of contraception for 4 weeks after initiation and for 4 weeks after each dose escalation.

GLP-1 AGONIST INJECTION COUNSELING

Injection technique is similar to insulin administration (see Insulin Injection Counseling later in the chapter).

- Inject subcutaneously into the abdomen (alternative administration sites include the back of the upper arms, outer thigh or upper buttock).
- Attach a new pen needle for each injection (if not already attached). Follow the manufacturer's instructions for priming (e.g., once per pen).
- After cleaning the hands and injection site, pinch a portion of the injection area and insert the pen needle at a 90-degree angle.
- Press the injection button and count 5 – 10 seconds before removing the needle.
- Rotate injection sites with each injection.
- Properly dispose of needles in a sharps disposal container. Do not store pens with a needle attached to reduce the risk of contamination or drug leakage.

SODIUM-GLUCOSE COTRANSPORTER 2 INHIBITORS

The sodium-glucose cotransporter 2 (SGLT2) protein, expressed in the proximal renal tubules, is responsible for the reabsorption of filtered glucose. By inhibiting SGLT2, these drugs reduce glucose reabsorption and ↑ urinary glucose excretion, which ↓ BG concentrations.

Canagliflozin, dapagliflozin, empagliflozin and ertugliflozin have shown benefits in patients with HF, CKD and/or ASCVD; they are recommended for diabetes treatment when these comorbid conditions are present, and select drugs are also approved for HF and CKD in patients without diabetes (see the Chronic Heart Failure and Renal Disease chapters). Dosing and eGFR thresholds for use vary by drug and indication, but most guidelines recommend use if eGFR ≥ 20 mL/min/1.73 m^2. SGLT2 inhibitor names end in "-gliflozin."

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Canagliflozin *(Invokana)*	100 mg daily prior to the first meal of the day Max: 300 mg daily eGFR 30-59: max dose is 100 mg daily	**WARNINGS** Ketoacidosis (can occur with BG < 250 mg/dL) – risk ↑ with metabolic stress, including acute illness, surgery, volume depletion and use of a ketogenic diet; D/C 3-4 days prior to surgery to ↓ risk Genital mycotic infections, urinary tract infections (including urosepsis and pyelonephritis), necrotizing fasciitis (perineum) Hypotension, AKI and renal impairment (due to intravascular volume depletion) Canagliflozin and bexagliflozin: ↑ risk of leg and foot amputations (higher risk with history of amputation, PAD, peripheral neuropathy and/or diabetic foot ulcers); risk of fractures **SIDE EFFECTS** ↑ urination, ↑ thirst, hypoglycemia, ↑ Mg/PO4 Canagliflozin: hyperkalemia risk when used with other drugs that increase potassium **NOTES** ↓ A1C 0.7-1%, low hypoglycemia risk (unless used with insulin) Not recommended in patients receiving dialysis
Dapagliflozin *(Farxiga)*	5 mg daily in the morning Max: 10 mg daily	
Empagliflozin *(Jardiance)*	10 mg daily in the morning Max: 25 mg daily	
Bexagliflozin *(Brenzavvy)*	20 mg daily in the morning	
Ertugliflozin *(Steglatro)*	5 mg daily in the morning Max: 15 mg daily	

eGFR units: mL/min/1.73 m^2.

SGLT2 INHIBITOR DRUG INTERACTIONS

- ↑ risk of intravascular volume depletion (causing hypotension and acute kidney injury) if used in combination with diuretics, RAAS inhibitors or NSAIDs.

BIGUANIDE

Metformin primarily works by ↓ hepatic glucose production, ↑ insulin sensitivity and ↓ intestinal absorption of glucose. Metformin is a commonly used treatment for T2D and can be used for prediabetes. Use of metformin is dependent on eGFR.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Metformin ***(Fortamet*, Glumetza****, *Glucophage*, Riomet)* IR: 500, 850, 1,000 mg ER: 500, 750, 1,000 mg *Riomet* liquid: 500 mg/5 mL	IR: 500 mg daily or BID ER: 500-1,000 mg daily (usually with dinner) Titrate weekly, usual maintenance dose: 1,000 mg BID Max dose: 2,000-2,550 mg/day (varies by product) Give with a meal to ↓ GI upset	**BOXED WARNING** Lactic acidosis – risk ↑ with renal impairment, contrast dye, excessive alcohol, select drugs (e.g., topiramate) and hypoxia **CONTRAINDICATIONS** eGFR < 30, acute or chronic metabolic acidosis (includes DKA) **WARNINGS** Not recommended to start if eGFR 30-45; reassess if eGFR < 45 during treatment (dose reduction may be needed) Vitamin B12 deficiency with long-term use: symptoms can include peripheral neuropathy and cognitive impairment; monitor B12 levels periodically (every 1-2 years) **SIDE EFFECTS** GI effects: diarrhea, nausea, flatulence, cramping; usually transient (i.e., they resolve over time) **NOTES** ↓ A1C 1-2%, weight neutral, no hypoglycemia ER: swallow whole; can leave a ghost tablet (empty shell) in the stool Dose titration recommended to reduce GI effects; glucose-lowering effect may not be seen with initial doses

eGFR units: mL/min/1.73 m^2.
**Brand discontinued but name still used in practice.*

METFORMIN DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Intra-arterial iodinated contrast media (used for imaging studies) can cause renal dysfunction, leading to an ↑ risk of lactic acidosis. Discontinue metformin before the imaging procedure. Metformin can be restarted 48 hours after the procedure if eGFR is stable.

INSULIN SECRETAGOGUES

Sulfonylureas (SUs) and meglitinides are known as insulin secretagogues; they work by stimulating insulin secretion from the pancreatic beta-cells to decrease postprandial BG. Meglitinides have a faster onset (15 – 60 minutes) and a shorter duration of action compared to the SUs. Meglitinide names end in "-glinide" and SU names start with "G" and end in "-ide."

SULFONYLUREAS

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Glipizide ***(Glucotrol XL)***	IR: 5 mg daily, titrate to a max dose of 40 mg/day Doses > 15 mg should be divided BID XL: 5 mg daily, titrate to a max dose of 20 mg/day	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Sulfa allergy (not likely to cross-react, see Drug Allergies & Adverse Drug Reactions chapter), T1D, DKA **WARNINGS** Hypoglycemia [(decreased risk with short-acting drugs (e.g., glipizide)] **SIDE EFFECTS** Weight gain, nausea **NOTES** ↓ A1C 1-2%; ↓ efficacy after long-term use (as pancreatic beta-cell function declines) Glipizide IR: take 30 minutes before a meal; all other products are taken with breakfast or the first meal of the day; may need to hold doses if NPO *Glucotrol XL* is an OROS formulation and can leave a ghost tablet (empty shell) in the stool Not recommended in older adults (included on the Beers Criteria list) due to hypoglycemia risk May ↑ risk of hemolytic anemia with G6PD deficiency
Glimepiride ***(Amaryl)***	1-2 mg daily, titrate to a max dose of 8 mg/day	
Glyburide **Micronized glyburide** ***(Glynase)***	Glyburide: 2.5-5 mg daily, titrate to a max dose of 20 mg/day *Glynase:* 1.5-3 mg daily, titrate to a max dose of 12 mg/day	

MEGLITINIDES

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Repaglinide	0.5-2 mg 2-4 times daily AC Take within 30 minutes before meals	**WARNINGS** Hypoglycemia, caution with severe liver/renal impairment **SIDE EFFECTS** Weight gain, headache, upper respiratory tract infections (URTIs) **NOTES** ↓ A1C 0.5-1.5% Skip dose if meal is skipped
Nateglinide	60-120 mg up to 3 times daily AC Take 1-30 minutes before meals	

SULFONYLUREA AND MEGLITINIDE DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Insulin combined with either SUs or meglitinides ↑ the risk of hypoglycemia and should be avoided. Use caution with other drugs that can ↓ BG (see Hypoglycemia section).
- Gemfibrozil and clopidogrel can ↑ repaglinide, leading to ↓ BG. Repaglinide is contraindicated with gemfibrozil.
- Alcohol can ↑ the risk for hypoglycemia when taking insulin or insulin secretagogues.

DIPEPTIDYL PEPTIDASE 4 INHIBITORS

Dipeptidyl peptidase 4 (DPP-4) inhibitors prevent the enzyme DPP-4 from breaking down incretin hormones, including GLP-1 and GIP, which enhances their effects. These hormones help regulate BG levels by ↑ glucose-dependent insulin secretion from the pancreatic beta-cells and ↓ glucagon secretion (which ↓ hepatic glucose production) from pancreatic alpha-cells. DPP-4 inhibitor names end in "-gliptin."

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Sitagliptin ***(Januvia, Zituvio)***	100 mg daily eGFR 30-45: 50 mg daily eGFR < 30: 25 mg daily	**WARNINGS** Pancreatitis, severe arthralgia (joint pain), acute renal failure, bullous pemphigoid (blisters/erosions requiring hospitalization) Risk of heart failure with saxagliptin and alogliptin, but warning added for class Alogliptin: hepatotoxicity **SIDE EFFECTS** Generally well tolerated, can cause nasopharyngitis, URTIs, headache, rash **NOTES** ↓ A1C 0.5-0.8%, weight neutral, low hypoglycemia risk (unless used with insulin)
Linagliptin ***(Tradjenta)***	5 mg daily No renal dose adjustments	
Saxagliptin *(Onglyza)*	2.5-5 mg daily eGFR < 45: 2.5 mg daily	
Alogliptin	25 mg daily CrCl 30-59: 12.5 mg daily CrCl < 30: 6.25 mg daily	

eGFR units: mL/min/1.73 m^2, CrCl units: mL/min.

DPP-4 INHIBITOR DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Saxagliptin and linagliptin are major substrates of CYP450 3A4 and P-gp; use caution with inducers (e.g., rifampin, carbamazepine) or inhibitors (e.g., itraconazole, clarithromycin).

THIAZOLIDINEDIONES

Pioglitazone is the only thiazolidinedione (TZD) available in the U.S. It is a peroxisome proliferator-activated receptor gamma (PPARγ) agonist that ↑ peripheral insulin sensitivity (i.e., it ↑ uptake and utilization of glucose by the peripheral tissues). TZD names end in "-glitazone."

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Pioglitazone ***(Actos)***	Initial: 15-30 mg daily Max dose: 45 mg daily	**BOXED WARNINGS** Can cause or exacerbate heart failure, do not use with NYHA Class III/IV heart failure **WARNINGS** Edema (including macular edema), risk of fractures, hepatic failure, can stimulate ovulation (which can lead to unintended pregnancy), ↑ risk of bladder cancer (do not use in patients with a history of bladder cancer) **SIDE EFFECTS** Peripheral edema, weight gain, URTIs, myalgia **NOTES** ↓ A1C 0.5-1.4%, low risk of hypoglycemia (unless used with insulin) Benefit seen in patients with MASH and stroke/myocardial infarction risk reduction observed in select patients

THIAZOLIDINEDIONE DRUG INTERACTIONS

- TZDs are major substrates of CYP2C8; use caution with inducers (e.g., rifampin) or inhibitors (e.g., gemfibrozil).

OTHER MEDICATIONS

The following drugs are not used routinely for the treatment of T2D, but can be used in specific situations.

DRUG CLASS	COMMENTS
Alpha-Glucosidase Inhibitors Acarbose Miglitol	MOA: inhibit the metabolism of complex carbohydrates and disaccharides (e.g., sucrose), which delays glucose absorption. Do not cause hypoglycemia alone, but if hypoglycemia occurs due to another drug, it cannot be treated with sucrose (present in fruit juices, table sugar or candy); glucose tablets or gel need to be purchased to treat hypoglycemia. Taken with the first bite of each meal; GI side effects are common (e.g., flatulence, diarrhea).
Bile Acid Binding Resins Colesevelam *(Welchol)*	Also indicated for dyslipidemia (see Dyslipidemia chapter). Constipation is the most common side effect; can bind to and decrease the absorption of other drugs.
Dopamine Agonist Bromocriptine	Contraindicated in patients with syncopal migraines (can cause hypotension and orthostasis) and those who are postpartum and/or breastfeeding (inhibits lactation). Should not be used with metoclopramide or other dopamine agonists.
Amylin Analog Pramlintide *(Symlin)* SC injection	MOA: helps control postprandial glucose by slowing gastric emptying, which suppresses glucagon secretion following a meal and ↑ satiety. Can be used in type 1 or type 2 diabetes; take before each meal, skip dose if skipping meal. Significant hypoglycemia risk; must reduce mealtime insulin dose by 50% when starting. Contraindicated in patients with gastroparesis. Side effects include nausea, vomiting, anorexia and weight loss.

COMBINATIONS

METFORMIN + SU
Metformin/glipizide
Metformin/glyburide

METFORMIN + TZD
Metformin/pioglitazone *(Actoplus Met)*

METFORMIN + DPP-4 INHIBITOR
Metformin/alogliptin *(Kazano)*
Metformin/linagliptin *(Jentadueto)*
Metformin/sitagliptin *(Janumet)*
Metformin/saxagliptin

METFORMIN + SGLT2 INHIBITOR
Metformin/canagliflozin *(Invokamet)*
Metformin/dapagliflozin *(Xigduo XR)*
Metformin/empagliflozin *(Synjardy)*
Metformin/ertugliflozin *(Segluromet)*

METFORMIN + SGLT2 INHIBITOR + DPP-4 INHIBITOR
Metformin/empagliflozin/linagliptin *(Trijardy XR)*

SULFONYLUREA + TZD
Glimepiride/pioglitazone *(Duetact)*

DPP-4 INHIBITOR + TZD
Alogliptin/pioglitazone *(Oseni)*

DPP-4 INHIBITOR + SGLT2 INHIBITOR
Linagliptin/empagliflozin *(Glyxambi)*
Saxagliptin/dapagliflozin *(Qtern)*
Sitagliptin/ertugliflozin *(Steglujan)*

GLP-1 AGONIST + INSULIN
Liraglutide/insulin degludec *(Xultophy)*
Lixisenatide/insulin glargine *(Soliqua)*

See Insulin section for premixed insulins.

INSULIN

The pancreas controls insulin release, providing a consistent level (or basal amount) at all times, then releasing more insulin when BG is elevated postprandially (after meals). In patients with diabetes, insulin can be administered to mimic the normal physiologic process (e.g., basal insulin plus mealtime insulin). Insulin is given subcutaneously (most common), intravenously (for acutely high BG) or inhaled (uncommon).

Insulin is a high-alert medication, which means it has a high risk of causing patient harm and requires extra care during handling and administration. The majority of errors seen with insulin are caused by human errors, such as misreading measurements, using the wrong insulin type, strength, dose or frequency and skipping meals.

INSULIN PROPERTIES AND TYPES

The graph below shows the onset, peak and duration of action of the common insulin types, which must be understood in order to design an insulin regimen and to make adjustments when BG trends too high or too low.

Basal Insulin

- Basal insulin includes glargine (red line) and ultra-long acting degludec (blue line). These insulins are "peakless" with an onset of 3 – 4 hours and duration ≥ 24 hours. They mainly impact fasting glucose.

Intermediate-Acting Insulin

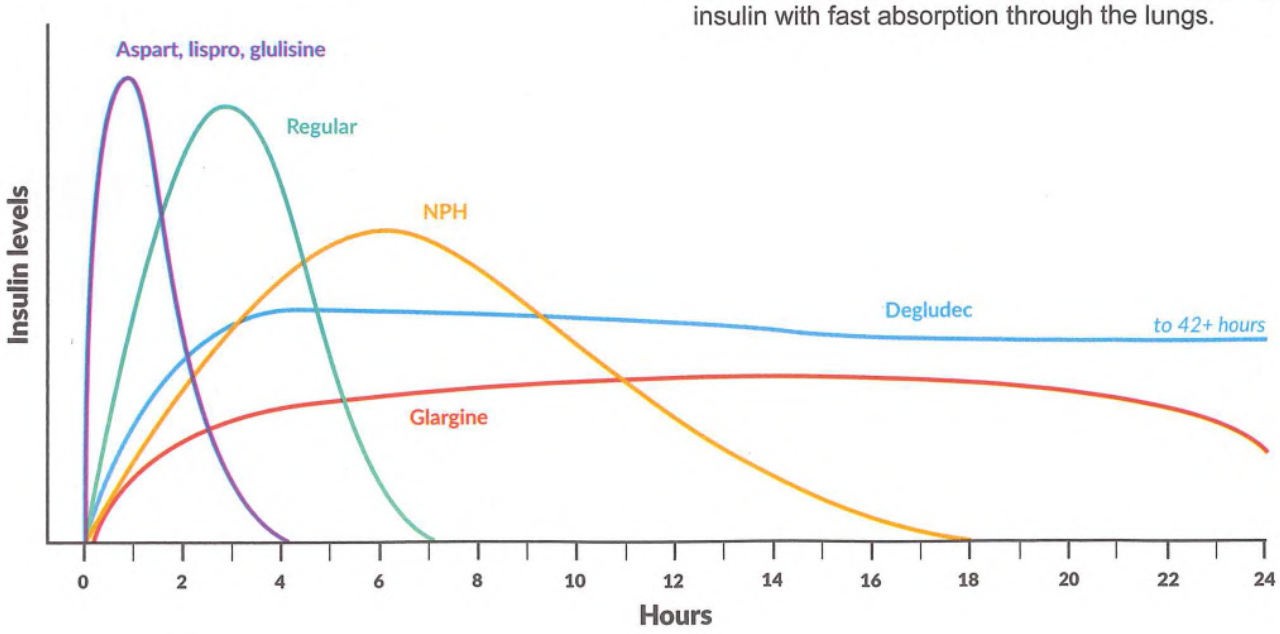
- Insulin NPH (yellow line) is intermediate-acting but can be used as a basal insulin. NPH has an onset of 1 – 2 hours, and peaks at 4 – 12 hours, which can cause hypoglycemia. BG control is further complicated by the variable, unpredictable duration of action (14 – 24 hours).
- The P in NPH is for protamine, which delays absorption and extends the duration of effect. Lispro-protamine and aspart-protamine (available in premixed solutions only) have the same onset, peak and duration as NPH.

Rapid-Acting and Short-Acting Insulin

- Rapid-acting insulin (purple line), including aspart, lispro and glulisine, provide a bolus dose similar to the pancreas releasing insulin in response to food. They have a fast onset (~15 min), peak in 1 – 2 hours and last 3 – 5 hours (gone by the next meal).
- Regular insulin U-100 (green line) is a short-acting insulin; like rapid-acting insulin, it can be given as a bolus at mealtimes, but has a slower onset (~30 minutes), peaks at ~2 hours and lasts 6 – 10 hours (longer than needed for a meal).

Other Insulins (Not Included in Graph)

- Regular U-500 is a very concentrated insulin with the same onset as regular insulin U-100, but a duration closer to NPH; it can last up to 24 hours. It is often dosed twice daily or TID, before meals.
- Inhaled insulin (not used commonly) is a mealtime insulin with fast absorption through the lungs.



INSULIN SAFETY ISSUES AND NOTES; APPLIES TO ALL INJECTABLE INSULIN, EXCEPT WHERE NOTED

CONTRAINDICATIONS

- Do not administer during episodes of hypoglycemia.

WARNINGS

- Hypoglycemia, hypokalemia (insulin facilitates K+ entry into cells and is used to treat hyperkalemia).

SIDE EFFECTS

- Weight gain: insulin causes excess glucose to move into adipose cells, and increases body fat, lean mass and appetite.
- Lipoatrophy: loss of SC fat at the injection site (which disfigures skin) and lipohypertrophy (accumulation of fat lumps under the injection site). Avoid both by rotating injection sites.

STORAGE AND ADMINISTRATION

- Most vials are 10 mL (a few products are also available in 3 mL, which decreases waste in an institutional setting) and most pens are 3 mL.
- Insulin concentrations are 100 units/mL, unless noted otherwise (discussed later in the chapter).
- Do not shake; turn suspensions (NPH, protamine mixes) up and down slowly or roll between the hands. Do not freeze or expose to extreme heat.
- Unopened insulin vials and pens are stored in the refrigerator. Open vials and pens can be kept at room temperature (see Room Temperature Stability of Insulin later in the chapter). It is uncomfortable to inject cold insulin.
- Pen devices should never be shared (even if the needle is changed) due to the risk for transmission of blood-borne pathogens.
- NPH and regular (or rapid-acting) insulins can be mixed in the same syringe; regular and rapid-acting insulins are clear and drawn up (into the syringe) first, before the NPH insulin, which is cloudy.

Rapid-Acting (Bolus) Insulin

Aspart *(Novolog, Novolog FlexPen,* Fiasp)

Lispro *(Humalog, Humalog KwikPen,* Admelog, Lyumjev)

Lispro U-200 *(Humalog U-200)*

Insulin Glulisine *(Apidra, Apidra Solostar)*

Interchangeable biosimilar to *Novolog: Merilog*

Clear and colorless

- Used as prandial insulin (to prevent high BG from a meal) and for correction doses (often using a sliding scale) when BG is high.
- Inject SC 5-15 minutes before meals so insulin is available when glucose from the meal is absorbed.
  - Lispro can also be administered right after eating.
  - *Fiasp* and *Lyumjev* can be injected with the first bite or within 20 minutes of starting a meal.
- Preferred insulin type for insulin pumps (discussed later in the chapter).
- Co-formulations with faster absorption: *Fiasp* [formulated with niacinamide (vitamin B3)] and *Lyumjev* (formulated with treprostinil and citrate).

Inhaled insulin *(Afrezza)*

- Contraindicated in any lung disease, including asthma and COPD; do not use in smokers.
- Can cause acute bronchospasm, cough and throat pain.
- Requires lung monitoring with pulmonary function tests (FEV1). Replace inhaler every 15 days.

Short-Acting (Bolus) Insulin

Regular *(Humulin R, Novolin R,* Novolin R ReliOn)

Clear and colorless

Rx and OTC

Myxredlin is a ready-to-use regular insulin IV solution (100 mL bag)

- Used as prandial insulin and for correction doses (often using a sliding scale) when BG is high.
- Inject SC 30 minutes before meals so insulin is available when glucose from the meal is absorbed.
- Regular insulin is preferred for IV infusions, including when used in parenteral nutrition formulations; it is less expensive than other insulins and when administered as a continuous IV infusion, the onset is immediate. IV regular insulin should be prepared in a non-PVC container.
- Can be mixed with NPH and administered twice daily (i.e., requires only 2 injections per day), 30 min before breakfast and dinner. Lunch is covered by the NPH, and possibly some residual regular insulin.

Concentrated Regular U-500 *(Humulin R U-500)*	■ Five times as concentrated as regular insulin; many safety risks. Recommended only when patients require > 200 units of insulin per day. ■ The prescribed dose of *Humulin R U-500* should always be expressed in units of insulin. ■ All patients using the U-500 insulin vial must be prescribed U-500 insulin syringes to avoid dosing errors; see the Syringes and Needles section. ■ Do not mix with any other insulin; only administer as SC injection (not IV, IM or in an insulin pump).
Intermediate-Acting (Basal) Insulin	
NPH *(Humulin N, Novolin N, Novolin N ReliOn)* Cloudy Rx and OTC	■ Given as a basal insulin, typically dosed twice daily. Can be a less expensive alternative, but causes more hypoglycemia. ■ If nocturnal hypoglycemia occurs with NPH dosed once daily QHS, the dose can be split (e.g., 2/3 QAM, 1/3 QHS).
Long-Acting (Basal) Insulin	
Insulin glargine *(Lantus, Toujeo, Basaglar)* Interchangeable biosimilars to *Lantus: Rezvoglar, Semglee* Clear and colorless Insulin detemir *(Levemir)* is no longer available in the United States	■ Usually injected once daily. ■ *Lantus* is 100 units/mL and *Toujeo* is a concentrated insulin glargine with 300 units/mL (an option when > 20 units/day of insulin glargine is needed). ■ *Toujeo* reaches max effect by the 5th day; coverage may not be immediate. ■ *Lantus* and *Toujeo* [and the rapid-acting insulins *Admelog* (lispro) and *Apidra* (glulisine)] are made by the same manufacturer and all of them are available as a *SoloStar* pen. ■ Do not mix with any other insulins.
Ultra-Long-Acting (Basal) Insulin	
Insulin degludec *(Tresiba)*	■ Insulin degludec comes in a vial (100 units/mL) and the *Tresiba FlexTouch* pen (available in 100 units/mL and 200 units/mL). ■ Can be useful when insulin glargine causes nocturnal hypoglycemia.
Premixed Insulin	
70/30 MIXES **70% NPH/30% regular *(Humulin 70/30, Novolin 70/30)*** Rx and OTC 70% aspart protamine/30% aspart *(Novolog Mix 70/30)* **75/25 MIX** 75% lispro protamine/25% lispro *(Humalog Mix 75/25)* **50/50 MIX** 50% lispro protamine/50% lispro *(Humalog Mix 50/50)*	■ Given BID (before breakfast and dinner), or sometimes TID (if the mix contains rapid-acting insulin). □ If mixture contains rapid-acting insulin: inject 15 minutes before a meal. □ If mixture contains regular insulin: inject 30 minutes before a meal. ■ The percentage of NPH or protamine insulin in the mix is listed first and the percentage of short-acting or rapid-acting insulin is listed second (e.g., *Humulin 70/30* contains 70% NPH and 30% regular). ■ NPH or protamine make the premixed insulins cloudy. **CASE SCENARIO** A 35-year-old female injects *Humulin 70/30* 60 units before breakfast and 20 units before dinner. **What is her TDD of regular insulin?** *Humulin 70/30* is 70% NPH and 30% regular. The regular insulin dose in the morning is 60 units × 0.3 = 18 units. The regular insulin dose in the evening is 20 units × 0.3 = 6 units. The TDD of regular insulin is 24 units.

DRUG INTERACTIONS WITH INSULIN

- Avoid concurrent use of insulin with sulfonylureas or meglitinides. May need to ↓ insulin dose when used with other antihyperglycemic drugs, including SGLT2 inhibitors, GLP-1 agonists, TZDs and DPP-4 inhibitors.
- Must reduce mealtime insulin by 50% when starting pramlintide to avoid severe hypoglycemia.
- May need to ↓ insulin dose when used with direct acting antivirals (DAAs) for hepatitis C virus treatment due to the risk of hypoglycemia.

INSULIN AVAILABLE OTC

Regular, NPH and premixed 70% NPH/30% regular insulins can be sold OTC or they can be dispensed with a prescription for insurance coverage. All basal and rapid-acting insulins are available by prescription only.

INSULIN DOSING AND CALCULATIONS

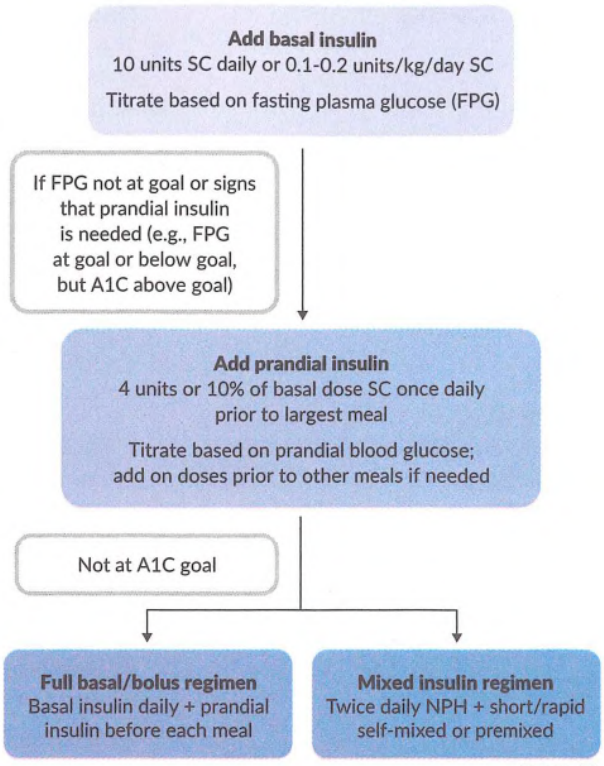
STARTING INSULIN IN TYPE 2 DIABETES

If an injectable medication is needed to reduce the A1C in T2D, a GLP-1 receptor agonist is preferred and should be considered first. If the patient is already on a GLP-1 agonist (or a GLP-1 agonist is not appropriate), insulin should be started.

An exception is when using insulin initially (at diagnosis) because the patient has very high BG (A1C > 10% or BG ≥ 300 mg/dL), symptoms of catabolism (e.g., DKA) or suspected insulin deficiency. If insulin is required, combination with a GLP-1 agonist is recommended for greater efficacy.

Starting insulin in T2D should follow a step-wise approach, where basal insulin is started first, then prandial insulin is added if needed (see flow diagram). A patient with T2D is still making some insulin, so full replacement is not needed initially; blood glucose and A1C trends will dictate when to increase insulin doses.

Starting Insulin in Type 2 Diabetes



STARTING INSULIN IN TYPE 1 DIABETES

All people with T1D require insulin. Most are treated with an insulin pump or multiple daily injections of insulin. Rapid-acting insulins and long-acting basal insulins are preferred because they are insulin analogs that provide a physiologic pattern of insulin that is analogous (similar) to that made by the body.

Calculating an initial insulin regimen in type 1 diabetes is shown in the Study Tip Gal below.

STARTING BASAL-BOLUS INSULIN IN TYPE 1 DIABETES

The typical starting dose for T1D is 0.5 units/kg/day.

Insulin is dosed using total body weight (TBW).

Commonly, 50% of the total daily dose (TDD) is administered as basal insulin and 50% as prandial (bolus) insulin. Steps:

1. Calculate the TDD (0.5 units/kg/day, using TBW).
2. Divide the TDD into 50% basal insulin and 50% bolus (rapid-acting) insulin.
3. Divide the bolus insulin evenly among 3 meals (or allocate more insulin for larger meals and less for smaller meals).

CASE SCENARIO

Start a basal-bolus regimen with insulin glargine and insulin lispro in a patient with type 1 diabetes who weighs 84 kg.

1. Calculate the TDD:
   0.5 units/kg/day × 84 kg = 42 units
2. Split the dose in half for basal and rapid-acting insulin:
   21 units insulin glargine and 21 units insulin lispro
3. Split rapid-acting insulin into 3 even doses:
   7 units insulin lispro TID AC

Regimen: 21 units insulin glargine daily and 7 units insulin lispro TID AC

STARTING A REGIMEN WITH NPH AND REGULAR INSULIN

NPH and regular insulin regimens are not preferred; neither insulin has a profile that can mimic the natural insulin release from the pancreas as well as basal and rapid-acting insulin combinations. However, the lower cost and ability to use less injections (since these insulins can be mixed) make this type of regimen more feasible for some patients.

The starting TDD of insulin is the same as with basal-bolus regimens. However, NPH is given twice daily with 30% of the TDD in the morning and 20% of the TDD in the evening. The remaining 50% of the TDD is given as regular insulin.

TREATMENT WITH AN INSULIN PUMP

Pumps can provide excellent BG control and require less daily insulin injections. Users must be motivated, willing to test their BG frequently and be able to understand the pump's operation. Prior experience with multiple daily injections is a requirement for switching to a pump.

Pumps hold insulin in a reservoir (see image to the right). The insulin runs from the pump through tubing to a small infusion set placed on the skin, usually on the abdomen, and then through a small cannula (needle) that inserts under the skin. The cannula tip rests in subcutaneous fatty tissue, where the insulin is released.

The insulin reservoir, tubing and infusion set need to be replaced regularly.

Insulin pumps deliver rapid-acting insulin (preferred) by two complementary methods, continuous and bolus dosing.

1. Continuous doses: small amounts of insulin are released every few minutes to provide a basal insulin level.
2. Bolus doses: the pump is programmed to release a bolus insulin dose to match the carbohydrates in a meal. The bolus dose is determined by calculating the patient's insulin to carbohydrate ratio (ICR) (see Mealtime Insulin Dosing Options section) and can be adjusted based on the current BG level (e.g., if low, use less insulin).

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Insulin is held in a reservoir that is inserted into the pump. The tubing connects the pump to the infusion set, which has a cannula that inserts under the skin.

Similar to a traditional insulin pump, insulin patch pumps deliver rapid-acting insulin at mealtimes (prandial) with or without continuous (basal) insulin release (varies by product). Patch pumps are smaller and more discreet than a traditional pump but can have limitations related to the flexibility of insulin dosing.

The patch pump contains a reservoir that is filled with rapid-acting insulin (separate prescription required) before the patch is applied (e.g., to the abdomen). Insulin is delivered via a cannula that inserts into the skin, and on-demand doses are delivered by pressing the buttons on the side of the device.

ADJUSTING INSULIN BASED ON BLOOD GLUCOSE TRENDS

After starting an initial insulin regimen, adjustments will be made to personalize the regimen for the patient based on BG readings. Insulin dose changes are not based on single BG measurements; there needs to be a trend showing that the BG runs too high or too low. BG is ideally checked before breakfast (FPG), lunch and dinner and at bedtime. A high or low BG reading is reflective of the insulin dose prior to that reading; look backwards to see which insulin doses could be contributing to the trend.

ADJUSTING BASAL INSULIN

Fasting BG highs or lows typically indicate that the basal insulin dose needs to be changed. The basal insulin may also require adjustment if a BG trend lasts most of the day (except with BG spikes after eating).

- Low fasting BG trend: ↓ the basal insulin dose.
- High fasting BG trend: ↑ the basal insulin dose.

ADJUSTING MEALTIME INSULIN

If the postprandial BG is high or low following the same meal on most days, the regular or rapid-acting insulin dose administered prior to that meal should be increased for high BG, or decreased for low BG.

If the preprandial BG is high or low before the same meal (e.g., lunch) on most days, the regular or rapid-acting insulin dose administered before the previous meal (e.g., breakfast) should be increased for high BG, or decreased for low BG.

CASE SCENARIO

RC, a 47-year-old male with type 2 diabetes, takes insulin glargine 18 units SC QHS and insulin aspart 5 units SC TID AC. He brings two days of BG readings, taken before meals and at bedtime, to his clinic visit.

	BREAKFAST	LUNCH	DINNER	BED
Day 1 (mg/dL)	105	118	200	126
Day 2 (mg/dL)	97	115	197	122

What adjustment should be made to RC's insulin regimen?

The insulin aspart dose taken prior to lunch should be increased.

Explanation: the goal range for preprandial blood glucose is 80-130 mg/dL. The readings are all within the normal range except for the readings before dinner. The high readings before dinner indicate that RC is not taking enough insulin before lunch. The lunchtime dose should be increased.

Fasting BG is most affected by the basal insulin. If the pre-breakfast readings were high, the insulin glargine dose would need to be increased.

If the readings at dinner were taken postprandially (instead of preprandially), the insulin aspart dose before dinner should be increased.

MEALTIME (PRANDIAL) INSULIN DOSING OPTIONS

OPTION 1: USE THE SAME INSULIN DOSE EVERY TIME

The mealtime (prandial) rapid-acting or regular insulin dose is kept the same every day for a meal (e.g., 20 units of insulin lispro before dinner).

- This assumes that the grams of carbohydrates eaten at dinner every day is about the same.
- This method results in high or low BG when the carbohydrate intake is higher or lower, respectively.

OPTION 2: CALCULATE AN INSULIN DOSE AT EACH MEAL

When carbohydrate intake varies from day to day (which is common), a simple calculation can provide the right amount of rapid-acting or regular insulin needed.

- The bolus dose is calculated with the insulin-to-carbohydrate ratio (ICR).
- The ICR indicates the grams of carbohydrates covered by 1 unit of insulin.
- There are two variations of the ICR formula, depending on the type of insulin being used. Regular insulin uses the Rule of 450, and rapid-acting insulin uses the Rule of 500. The TDD of insulin used in the formula should account for both long-acting (basal) and short- or rapid-acting insulins included in the regimen.

ICR: RULE OF 450 *FOR REGULAR*

$$\frac{450}{\text{total daily dose of insulin (TDD)}} = \text{grams of carbohydrates covered by 1 unit of regular insulin}$$

ICR: RULE OF 500 *FOR RAPID-ACTING*

$$\frac{500}{\text{total daily dose of insulin (TDD)}} = \text{grams of carbohydrates covered by 1 unit of rapid-acting insulin}$$

CASE SCENARIO

ST is a 70 kg female with T1D who uses an insulin pump. The continuous (basal) dose delivered by the pump in a 24 hour period is 26 units of insulin lispro. The average daily amount of insulin lispro administered as bolus doses with meals is 24 units.

Calculate the ICR.

ST uses rapid-acting insulin. Use the Rule of 500.

$$\frac{500}{\text{total daily dose of insulin (TDD)}} = \text{grams of carbohydrates covered by 1 unit of rapid-acting insulin}$$

$$\frac{500}{50 \text{ units}} = 10$$

ST has an ICR of 1:10, which means 1 unit of rapid-acting insulin covers 10 grams of carbohydrates.

ST will eat a hamburger (24 g carbohydrate) and fries (28 g carbohydrate) for lunch. She adds up the total carbohydrates and divides by 10 to calculate the bolus dose:

$$\frac{24 \text{ g (burger)} + 28 \text{ g (fries)}}{10 \text{ (ICR)}} = 5.2 \text{ units}$$

ST enters 5.2 units on the pump. If she was using a syringe or pen to inject, she would round to the nearest whole number.

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CORRECTION DOSES FOR ELEVATED BLOOD GLUCOSE

BG that is higher than the targeted range can be lowered with a bolus called a correction dose.

1. The first step is to calculate the correction factor, which indicates how much the BG will be lowered (in mg/dL) by 1 unit of insulin.

   ☐ To calculate the correction factor, use the 1,500 Rule for regular insulin and the 1,800 Rule for rapid-acting insulin. The TDD of insulin used in the formula should account for both long-acting (basal) and short- or rapid-acting insulins included in the regimen.

CORRECTION FACTOR – 1,500 RULE *FOR REGULAR*

$$\frac{1{,}500}{\text{total daily dose of insulin (TDD)}} = \text{correction factor for 1 unit of regular insulin}$$

CORRECTION FACTOR – 1,800 RULE *FOR RAPID-ACTING*

$$\frac{1{,}800}{\text{total daily dose of insulin (TDD)}} = \text{correction factor for 1 unit of rapid-acting insulin}$$

2. Next, calculate the correction dose, which is the total units of insulin needed to return the BG to the target range. The formula for the correction dose is the same for both regular and rapid-acting insulin.

CORRECTION DOSE *FOR BOTH TYPES*

$$\frac{\text{(blood glucose now)} - \text{(target blood glucose)}}{\text{correction factor}} = \text{correction dose}$$

CASE SCENARIO

JJ is a 35-year-old male with T2D currently treated with *Lantus* 50 units SC QHS and *Novolog* 15 units SC TID AC.

1. What is JJ's correction factor?

Since *Novolog* is a rapid-acting insulin, use the Rule of 1,800 to calculate JJ's correction factor.

$$\frac{1{,}800}{\text{total daily dose of insulin (TDD)}} = \text{correction factor for 1 unit of rapid-acting insulin}$$

50 units Lantus + 45 units Novolog = 95 units ← TDD

$$\frac{1{,}800}{95 \text{ units}} = 18.947 = 19$$ ← Round to the nearest whole #

A correction factor of 19 means 1 unit of rapid-acting insulin will lower the BG by 19 mg/dL.

2. JJ has a target premeal BG of 120 mg/dL. He checks his BG before dinner and it is 200 mg/dL. What dose of *Novolog* should JJ administer before dinner?

Determine the correction dose using the formula:

$$\frac{\text{(blood glucose now)} - \text{(target blood glucose)}}{\text{correction factor}} = \text{correction dose}$$

$$\frac{200 \text{ mg/dL} - 120 \text{ mg/dL}}{19} = 4 \text{ units}$$

Add the correction dose to the number of units JJ usually administers before meals to get the dose he needs before dinner: 4 units + 15 units = 19 units *Novolog*.

INSULIN CONVERSIONS

Most insulin conversions are 1:1 (the same dose is used), but the regimen might need to be split up differently. The exceptions involve converting twice daily NPH and different forms of glargine; see the following Study Tip Gal.

CONVERTING BETWEEN INSULINS

Most insulin conversions are 1:1

- The dose of the new insulin is usually the same as the old insulin*

Exception #1

NPH dosed BID → insulin glargine (e.g., *Lantus, Toujeo)* dosed daily

- Use 80% of the NPH dose

Example:
NPH 30 units AC breakfast and 20 units AC dinner = 50 units NPH daily

50 × 0.8 = 40 units insulin glargine once daily

Exception #2

Toujeo → other insulin glargine (e.g., *Lantus, Basaglar)*

- Use 80% of the *Toujeo* dose

**The dose of the new insulin might need to be adjusted if the BG is not controlled (e.g., using a higher dose for hyperglycemia).*

INSULIN ADMINISTRATION

INSULIN STRENGTHS AND CONTAINERS

Most insulin products contain 100 units/mL of insulin. Some insulins have > 100 units/mL; these are concentrated insulins (see next section). Insulin is available in:

- Vials (usually 10 mL); insulin is drawn up with an insulin syringe. *Humulin R U-500* comes in a 20 mL vial. A few products come in a 3 mL vial (primarily for use in an institutional setting to decrease waste; 10 mL vials are more commonly dispensed for patient use).
- Pens; insulin is ready to inject once a needle is attached. Pens are dialed to the number of units needed. All pens contain 3 mL of insulin, except *Toujeo*, which is available in two sizes: 1.5 mL and 3 mL.

Insulin pens are easy to use; simply dial the number of units to inject.

Orawan Pattarawimonchai/Shutterstock.com

Example of providing a 20-unit dose of *Lantus* 100 units/mL with a pen or with a vial and syringe:

- The *Lantus Solostar* pen would be dialed to 20 units, which would provide 0.2 mL.
- The *Lantus* 10 mL vial provides the same dose by drawing up 0.2 mL with a U-100 syringe.

All insulin pens are multidose; needles must be dispensed with all insulin pens. Some pens are disposable, and others have replaceable cartridges.

CONCENTRATED INSULIN

Injecting high doses of U-100 insulin can require a volume that is uncomfortable to inject and use of more than one syringe (if doses are > 100 units). Concentrated insulin is useful to reduce the volume of the injection, but can be fatal when used incorrectly. Fortunately, most concentrated insulin comes in pens, which are simply dialed to the correct dose. The concentrated insulin that comes in both a pen and a vial is regular insulin U-500, which has higher risk.

INSULIN THAT COMES CONCENTRATED

Rapid-Acting Insulin
Humalog KwikPen, Lyumjev KwikPen (lispro): 200 units/mL
Short-Acting Insulin
Humulin R U-500 KwikPen and vial: 500 units/mL
Long-Acting Insulin
Tresiba FlexTouch pen (degludec): 200 units/mL
Toujeo SoloStar, Toujeo Max SoloStar pens (glargine): 300 units/mL

Example of providing an 80-unit dose with *Tresiba FlexTouch* U-100 and U-200:

Pens of either strength would be dialed to 80 units. The difference is the volume of the injection.

- An 80-unit dose with U-100 is 0.8 mL.
- An 80-unit dose with U-200 is 0.4 mL (half the volume).

CONCENTRATED REGULAR INSULIN U-500

Humulin R U-500 is five times as concentrated as regular insulin U-100. It is useful for patients taking > 200 units/day, but has a high risk for dosing errors.

Methods to avoid dosing errors include:

- The prescribed dose of *Humulin R U-500* (vial) should always be expressed in units of insulin. Only dispense with U-500 syringes (see Selecting an Insulin Syringe section).
- *Humulin R U-500 KwikPen* can provide up to 300 units in one injection and has a lower risk of dosing errors.

DISPENSING INSULIN

Dispensing insulin in an outpatient pharmacy requires a calculation of the days' supply and rounding up to the nearest vial/pen size.

Example: a patient takes 35 units of *Lantus* daily. How many *Lantus SoloStar* pens should be dispensed to provide a 30-day supply?

Step 1: calculate the total number of units needed.
35 units/day × 30 days = 1,050 units of insulin needed

Step 2: calculate the number of units per insulin pen, based on the concentration of insulin.
Lantus 100 units/mL × 3 mL per pen = 300 units per pen

Step 3: calculate the number of pens to be dispensed. Remember, pens cannot be broken, so round up.
1,050 units needed × (1 pen / 300 units) = 3.5 pens

Answer: 4 pens must be dispensed to provide enough insulin

Remember, insulin pens require priming prior to each dose (usually with 2 units). Some pharmacists account for this in their calculation of days' supply, but it is not standard practice to do so.

INSULIN STABILITY

Unused insulin vials, pens and cartridges are stored in the refrigerator. The expiration date of insulin that has been stored in the refrigerator is the manufacturer's expiration date on the label.

Once the insulin is in use it can be kept at room temperature, but the manufacturer's expiration date no longer applies. Insulin stored at room temperature must be used within a specific number of days based on the type of insulin (see the following Study Tip Gal). This is an important counseling point for patients.

Notice that most insulin is stable at room temperature for 28 days including all rapid-acting insulin. The insulins with shorter stability are typically pens.

ROOM TEMPERATURE STABILITY OF INSULIN

1-2 Weeks	
Humalog Mix 50/50 and *75/25* pens	10 days
Humulin 70/30 pen	
2 Weeks	
Humulin N pen	14 days
Novolog Mix 70/30 pen	
~4 Weeks	
Apidra, Humalog, Novolog, Admelog, Lyumjev, Fiasp vials and pens	28 days
Humalog Mix 75/25 vial	
Novolog Mix 70/30 vial	
Novolin R U-100, N and *70/30* pens	
Humulin R U-500 pen	
Lantus, Basaglar, Semglee vials and pens	
Humulin R U-100, N and *70/30* vials	31 days
~6 Weeks	
Humulin R U-500 vial	40 days
Novolin R U-100, N and *70/30* vials	42 days
8 Weeks	
Tresiba and *Toujeo* pens	56 days

SYRINGES AND NEEDLES

SELECTING AN INSULIN SYRINGE

Use the smallest U-100 syringe that will hold the units of insulin needed. The unit markings are in smaller increments on smaller syringes, which increases the accuracy of insulin measurements.

- 0.3 mL syringe for less than 30 units
- 0.5 mL syringe for 30 – 50 units
- 1 mL syringe for 51 – 100 units

A 1 mL U-100 insulin syringe, which holds up to 100 units. khuntapol/Shutterstock.com

Humulin R U-500 insulin vials can only be dispensed with U-500 syringes. The U-500 vials have a dark green cap and the U-500 syringes (Rx only) have dark green needle covers. In contrast, U-100 syringes have orange caps. A U-500 syringe holds up to 250 units; a U-100 1 mL syringe holds up to 100 units.

SELECTING AN INSULIN PEN NEEDLE

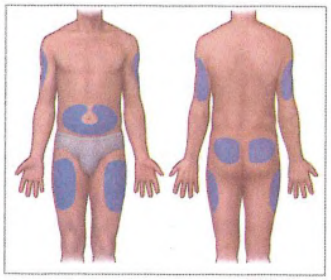
Needles are chosen by the length and the gauge (thickness). The higher the gauge, the thinner the needle [ranges from 28G (thickest) to 32G (thinnest)]. A 32G cannula has a width of ~2 human hairs. Shorter and higher-gauge needles cause less pain.

- The shortest needles are 4 mm and 5 mm in length and are preferred for most pens. They do not require the skin to be pinched during administration and are good for thinner patients and children.
- 8 mm needles are long enough for most patients; pinch up the skin before injecting.
- 12.7 mm (1/2 inch) needles may be needed for obese patients; pinch up the skin before injecting.

Common brands for needles and syringes include *BD*, *Comfort EZ* and *Easy Touch*. Needles require a prescription in some states.

INSULIN INJECTION COUNSELING

1. Get supplies. Wash hands.
2. Check insulin for discoloration and particles. Discard if present.
3. If the insulin contains NPH or protamine, it is a suspension and needs to be resuspended (do not shake):
   - ☐ Vials: roll the bottle gently between the hands.
   - ☐ Pens: invert (turn upside down) 4 – 5 times.
4. Clean the injection site (area of the skin) with an alcohol swab. If using a vial, also wipe the top with an alcohol swab (after removing the cover).
5. Pens:
   - ☐ Use a new needle for each injection. Prior to each injection, prime the needle by turning the knob to 2 units (can vary based on the insulin), then face the needle away from you and press the injection button.
   - ☐ Turn the dosing knob to the correct number of units, then inject (see number 7, below).
6. Vials:
   - ☐ Use a new syringe for each injection; syringes come with a needle attached. Inject an equal volume of air into the vial before withdrawing the insulin. Limit bubbles in the syringe.
   - ☐ If mixing NPH and regular or rapid-acting insulin in the same syringe, the clear insulin (regular or rapid-acting) should be drawn into the syringe before the cloudy (NPH) insulin. *Tip:* inject air into the cloudy insulin first, then inject air into the clear insulin before withdrawing it.
7. The abdomen is the preferred injection site, as insulin is best absorbed here. Alternative sites for injection: back of the upper arm, upper buttock and lateral thigh area (shaded areas of image).



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8. With needles > 5 mm, gently pinch a 2-inch portion of the skin between your thumb and first finger (typically not required with shorter needles).
9. Insert the needle all the way in. Pens are injected straight down (at a 90-degree angle). Syringes are injected at 90 degrees for most or 45 degrees if the patient is thin.
10. Press the injection button (pen) or plunger (syringe) all the way down to inject the insulin. Count 5 – 10 seconds before removing the needle.
11. Rotate injection sites around the abdomen regularly to prevent skin damage.
12. Properly dispose of needles or entire syringes (see Device Disposal section). Do not store pens with the needle attached.

DEVICE DISPOSAL

Used needles, syringes, single-dose pens (with needles attached) and lancets should be placed in a sharps disposal container and taken to a disposal site. Locations are provided by the local public health agency. Alternatively, a heavy plastic milk bottle (not glass) or metal coffee can works well.

BLOOD GLUCOSE MONITORING

Blood glucose monitoring (BGM) refers to patients tracking their BG using a glucose meter or a continuous glucose monitor (CGM). CGMs are taped to the skin and have a probe that passes through the skin and into the fatty tissue. The probe provides measurements of the glucose level in the interstitial fluid between the cells. CGM also provides a percent time in range, a useful metric of glycemic control.

PREPARING TO USE A GLUCOSE METER

- If the meter requires calibration, recalibrate each time a new canister of test strips is opened, if the meter was left in extreme cold or heat, if it was dropped or if the BG value does not match what the patient is feeling.
- Keep test strips in the original container with the cap closed. Light and air can damage test strips. Check the expiration date; expired test strips can give false results.
- Wash hands vigorously using warm water.
- Dry hands thoroughly; water can dilute the blood sample and give a false result.
- Allow arm to hang down for 30 seconds so blood can pool in the fingertips. Do not squeeze the finger.

TESTING WITH A GLUCOSE METER

- Insert test strip into meter.
- Prick side of fingertip (less painful) with a lancet.
- Apply a drop of blood to the test strip.
- Record the result in a logbook, or the meter might store the results.
- Dispose of the used lancet in a sharps container.

ALTERNATIVE SITE TESTING

- Some meters are approved to test blood from alternative sites (forearm, palm, thigh), which can hurt less than the side of a fingertip.
- Alternative testing sites are useful only when the BG is stable because the BG level can be ~20 minutes old. Do not use when BG is changing quickly (e.g., after eating or exercise) or when hypoglycemia is suspected.
- The lancing device might require a special cap screwed onto the tip to use on an alternative site.

HYPOGLYCEMIA

Hypoglycemia is defined as BG < 70 mg/dL. Low BG can have severe consequences, including falls, motor vehicle accidents and death. Each episode contributes to irreversible cognitive impairment.

HYPOGLYCEMIA SYMPTOMS

Low BG symptoms include dizziness, shakiness, anxiety/irritability, confusion, tremors, palpitations/tachycardia, diaphoresis (sweating), hunger, nausea, headache, ataxia and blurred vision.

Severe hypoglycemia can cause seizures, coma and death. All episodes of hypoglycemia are dangerous and should be reported to the prescriber. Monitoring with a CGM can help by displaying the BG every few minutes and sounding an alert when the BG level falls too low. CGM should be considered for individuals at high risk for hypoglycemia (e.g., T1D, pregnancy, multiple insulin injections).

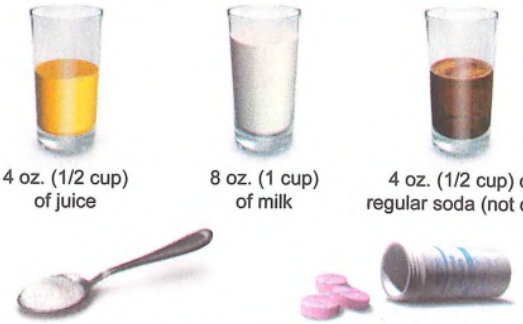
HYPOGLYCEMIA TREATMENT

CONSCIOUS AND ABLE TO SWALLOW

Pure glucose (tablets or gel) is preferred, but any form of carbohydrate that contains glucose will work (see next page). Added fat (e.g., a chocolate candy bar) is not recommended; it slows absorption and prolongs hypoglycemia. To treat, follow the "rule of 15":

1. Ingest 15 – 20 grams of glucose or simple carbohydrates.
2. Recheck BG after 15 minutes.
3. If hypoglycemia continues, repeat steps 1 & 2.
4. Once BG is normal, eat a small meal or snack.

Treating Hypoglycemia with 15 Grams of Carbs



4 oz. (1/2 cup) of juice

8 oz. (1 cup) of milk

4 oz. (1/2 cup) of regular soda (not diet)

1 tablespoon of sugar, honey, or corn syrup

3–4 glucose tablets or 1 serving glucose gel (follow package instructions)

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UNCONSCIOUS

When oral treatment is not possible, treat with dextrose (if there is IV access) or with glucagon. Caregivers for patients at high risk for hypoglycemia should know how to administer glucagon 1 mg SC injection *(GlucaGen, Gvoke)*, dasiglucagon injection *(Zegalogue)* or glucagon nasal spray *(Baqsimi)*. If using glucagon, place the patient in a lateral recumbent position (on their side) to protect the airway and prevent choking when consciousness returns.

DRUG-INDUCED HIGH OR LOW BLOOD GLUCOSE

DRUGS THAT CAUSE HYPOGLYCEMIA

- Insulin is the primary cause of drug-induced hypoglycemia.
- The insulin secretagogues (sulfonylureas and meglitinides) and pramlintide are high-risk.
  - Sulfonylureas are not recommended in older adults (Beers Criteria) due to this risk.
- GLP-1 agonists, DPP-4 inhibitors, SGLT2 inhibitors and TZDs have a low risk for hypoglycemia when used alone. When used in combination with insulin or a sulfonylurea, the risk is higher, and the insulin or sulfonylurea dose may need to be lowered.
- Alcohol, especially if taken on an empty stomach, can cause hypoglycemia when used with insulin or sulfonylureas.
- Beta-blockers can enhance the hypoglycemic effects of insulin and sulfonylureas and mask some of the symptoms of hypoglycemia (e.g., shakiness, palpitations, anxiety); sweating, and possibly hunger, will still be present. Counsel patients to recognize symptoms and test BG if unsure.

DRUGS THAT CAUSE HYPERGLYCEMIA

It is preferable, but not always possible, to avoid drugs that increase BG (see Key Drugs Guy). If not avoidable (e.g., using tacrolimus post-transplant), the increase in BG will need to be managed.

DRUGS THAT AFFECT BLOOD GLUCOSE

↑ BG

Thiazide & Loop Diuretics
Tacrolimus, Cyclosporine
Protease Inhibitors
Quinolones*
Antipsychotics (e.g., olanzapine, quetiapine)
Statins
Steroids (systemic)
Cough Syrups
Niacin

Others:
Azole Antifungals (systemic)
Beta-Agonists
Beta-Blockers*
Octreotide*

Beta-Blockers*
Quinolones*
Tramadol

Others:
Linezolid
Octreotide*
Pentamidine
Quinine

↓ BG

**Can cause hypo or hyperglycemia.*

INPATIENT GLUCOSE CONTROL

Persistent hyperglycemia (BG ≥ 180 mg/dL) should be treated in hospitalized patients, and BG should be maintained within a target range of 100 – 180 mg/dL for noncritically ill (non-ICU) patients and 140 – 180 mg/dL for critically ill (ICU) patients. More stringent goals might be appropriate for select ICU patients.

The use of sliding scale insulin (SSI) alone to control BG in the hospital setting is discouraged. This method of administering insulin in response to elevated BG levels is reactionary (treats BG after it becomes elevated, rather than preventing elevated BG) and leads to poor outcomes. In addition, most sliding scales used are not patient-specific. See the Sliding Scale Example to the right.

- Insulin is used for most hospitalized patients; the regimen depends primarily on oral intake.
- If oral intake is adequate, a regimen with basal, bolus (prandial) and correction doses (usually added to the mealtime bolus dose) is preferred.
- A basal and correction dose strategy (without prandial insulin) is recommended if the patient is not eating well (poor intake). For critically ill patients, a continuous intravenous insulin infusion is recommended.
- Correction dose insulin is given when BG is already high, similar to a sliding scale, but the difference is that the correction dose scale (i.e., the dose to administer for a given BG level) is designed for a specific patient. It is based on the patient's insulin sensitivity factor (same as the correction factor), which indicates how much the BG will drop with each unit of insulin.

Sliding scales and correction dose insulin use rapid-acting or regular insulin. Rapid-acting insulin is preferable because it will lower the BG faster.

SLIDING SCALE EXAMPLE

BLOOD GLUCOSE READING (MG/DL)	INSTRUCTION
< 60	Hold insulin; contact MD
150-200	Give 2 units of insulin
201-250	Give 4 units of insulin
251-300	Give 6 units of insulin
301-350	Give 8 units of insulin
351-400	Give 10 units of insulin
401-450	Call MD

HYPERGLYCEMIC CRISES

DIABETIC KETOACIDOSIS

Diabetic ketoacidosis (DKA) is a life-threatening crisis that occurs most often in patients with T1D, but can also occur in patients with T2D. DKA can be the initial presentation in T1D or it can be caused by insulin omission (e.g., unable to afford insulin) or subtherapeutic insulin dosing (e.g., increased insulin requirements due to a stressor, such as an infection).

In DKA, ketones are present because triglycerides and amino acids are used for energy, which produces free fatty acids (FFAs) that are converted to ketones by glucagon. Insulin normally prevents this conversion, but in DKA, insulin is absent or severely lacking. DKA can be recognized by:

- BG ≥ 200 mg/dL (or history of diabetes)
- Ketones [present in urine (ketonuria) and serum (ketonemia)], which can result in "fruity" smelling breath, abdominal pain, nausea and vomiting, and dehydration
- Metabolic acidosis (arterial pH < 7.3 and/or bicarbonate < 18 mEq/L; most patients will have an anion gap > 12)

HYPEROSMOLAR HYPERGLYCEMIC STATE

Hyperosmolar hyperglycemic state (HHS) has a higher mortality rate than DKA, but is less common. HHS is mostly seen in patients with T2D. The primary cause is illness (e.g., infection, stroke) that leads to reduced fluid intake. This, along with fluid shifts and osmotic diuresis, leads to severe dehydration with altered consciousness. HHS is recognized by:

- Confusion, delirium
- BG ≥ 600 mg/dL, with high (> 320 mOsm/L) total serum osmolality
- Extreme dehydration
- No acidosis (pH ≥ 7.3, bicarbonate ≥ 15 mEq/L)
- No ketones (because patients with T2D still produce some insulin)

Severe hyperglycemia can decrease sodium levels, which may require correction in HHS (or DKA).

DKA AND HHS TREATMENT

The primary treatment is aggressive fluids (first) and insulin to treat the hyperglycemia

FLUIDS first for all patients*

- Start with NS
- When blood glucose < 250 mg/dL, add D5W or D10W (e.g., change to D5½NS)

REGULAR insulin infusion

- DKA: 0.1 units/kg bolus, then 0.1 units/kg/hr continuous infusion
- HHS: 0.05 units/kg/hr continuous infusion

PREVENT hypokalemia

- Insulin shifts K+ into cells; serum level with drop; monitor K+ and maintain serum levels of 4-5 mEq/L

**Fluids may correct acidosis (in patients with DKA); can consider treating with sodium bicarbonate if pH < 7.*

SELECTING DRUG TREATMENT

The Study Tip Gal below summarizes some of the key safety issues seen with diabetes medications, and the Case Scenario on the following page highlights how these safety issues could appear in exam questions. More examples can be found in the QBank.

SUMMARY OF DRUG SAFETY ISSUES

IF PRESENT	AVOID
Thyroid cancer, including medullary thyroid carcinoma	GLP-1 agonists, GLP-1/GIP agonists
Gastroparesis, GI disorders	GLP-1 agonists, GLP-1/GIP agonists, pramlintide
Genital infection/UTI	SGLT2 inhibitors
Heart failure	TZDs, alogliptin, saxagliptin
Hypoglycemia	Insulin, sulfonylureas, meglitinides, pramlintide
Hypotension/dehydration	SGLT2 inhibitors
Hypokalemia	Insulin
Ketoacidosis	SGLT2 inhibitors (can occur when BG < 250 mg/dL)
Lactic acidosis	Metformin; ↑ risk with renal impairment, alcoholism
Osteopenia/osteoporosis	Canagliflozin and bexagliflozin (↓ BMD, fractures), TZDs (fractures)
Pancreatitis	DPP-4 inhibitors, GLP-1 agonists, GLP-1/GIP agonists
Peripheral neuropathy, PAD, foot ulcers	Canagliflozin, bexagliflozin
Sulfa allergy, severe	Sulfonylureas (or use cautiously)
Renal insufficiency (eGFR or CrCl < 30)	Metformin, exenatide, glyburide; may need to start insulin at a lower dose
Weight gain/obesity	Sulfonylureas, meglitinides, TZDs, insulin

CASE SCENARIO

CS is a 56-year-old female with hypertension, diabetes and a past MI. At her last clinic visit 3 months ago, her A1C was 8.6% despite treatment with metformin ER 2,000 mg PO daily and *Januvia* 100 mg PO daily. At that time, *Invokana* 100 mg PO daily was added to her regimen. CS also takes aspirin, rosuvastatin, lisinopril, *Coreg CR* and hydrochlorothiazide for her hypertension and ASCVD.

At the current visit, CS reports episodes of dry mouth, weakness, dizziness and lightheadedness. On a couple of occasions she has nearly fainted. These symptoms began approximately 2 months ago.

What do CS's symptoms likely describe?
CS has symptoms of dehydration and hypotension.

Which medications could be associated with these symptoms?
The addition of *Invokana* (canagliflozin) to her medication regimen put CS at risk for these adverse effects. *Invokana* decreases blood glucose by increasing urinary excretion; water is also excreted with glucose. The use of diuretics and antihypertensive medications could be contributing to the problem due to additive effects.

What laboratory abnormalities could occur with this combination of medications?
CS is at risk for acute kidney injury. Evaluate for elevated BUN, SCr and assess the eGFR. Check an anion gap and ketones; if they are elevated, this is a sign of ketoacidosis, which can occur with *Invokana*.

If asked to select an alternative diabetes medication, what should be selected?
There are a number of treatment options for diabetes management. CS's history of ASCVD will dictate the next treatment option. An SGLT2 inhibitor was appropriate, but due to side effects, she should be switched to a GLP-1 agonist with benefit (e.g., dulaglutide, liraglutide, SC semaglutide). Her DPP-4 inhibitor [sitagliptin *(Januvia)]* would need to be discontinued when this is started (it should not be used in combination with a GLP-1 agonist).

KEY COUNSELING POINTS

See the Drug Formulations and Patient Counseling chapter for counseling language/layman's terminology.

GLP-1 AGONISTS AND GLP-1/GIP AGONISTS

- Subcutaneous injections: see GLP-1 Agonist Injection Counseling section for details.
- *Byetta:* give within 60 minutes before meals; *Rybelsus:* take 30 minutes before breakfast; others can be taken anytime.
- *Trulicity, Bydureon BCise, Ozempic, Mounjaro:* inject once a week. The needles are inside the box or built into the pen.
- *Byetta, Victoza:* needles need to be purchased.
- If injection has been in the refrigerator, leave at room temperature for 15 minutes before using.
- *Bydureon BCise:* shake the injection vigorously to ensure the medication is evenly mixed. Look in the window to check for drug particles; if present, shake again.
- Can cause:
  - Nausea, diarrhea, decreased appetite, weight loss.
  - Pancreatitis and gallbladder disease.
  - Kidney damage, especially from dehydration due to severe vomiting or diarrhea.
  - *Bydureon BCise:* abscesses and nodules at the injection site.
  - *Ozempic, Mounjaro, Trulicity:* diabetic retinopathy complications.

SGLT2 INHIBITORS

- Can cause:
  - Hypotension.
  - Ketoacidosis. Stop prior to surgery to reduce risk.
  - Severe UTIs and genital fungal infections.
  - Canagliflozin and bexagliflozin: amputation risk (avoid if foot problems, neuropathy), fractures.

METFORMIN

- Can cause:
  - ☐ Lactic acidosis.
  - ☐ Diarrhea, nausea; usually goes away over time. Taking with food and using long-acting metformin helps.
- With long-term metformin, take a vitamin B12 supplement.
- Long-acting formulations of metformin can leave a ghost tablet in the stool.

THIAZOLIDINEDIONES

- Can cause:
  - ☐ Heart failure (or worsen existing disease).
  - ☐ Weight gain.
  - ☐ Bone fractures.

DPP-4 INHIBITORS

- Can cause:
  - ☐ Pancreatitis.
  - ☐ Renal impairment.
  - ☐ Severe arthralgia.
  - ☐ Saxagliptin and alogliptin: heart failure.

SULFONYLUREAS/MEGLITINIDES

- Take sulfonylureas with breakfast, except glipizide IR (take 30 minutes before meals).
- Take meglitinides within 30 minutes before meals. Do not take if skipping the meal.
- Can cause:
  - ☐ Hypoglycemia.
  - ☐ Weight gain.

INSULINS

- Subcutaneous injections: see Insulin Injection Counseling section for details.
- Can cause:
  - ☐ Hypoglycemia.
  - ☐ Hypokalemia.
  - ☐ Weight gain.
- Store unopened insulin pens/vials in the refrigerator. Once opened, store at room temperature and discard after the designated number of days (based on the type of insulin).

PRAMLINTIDE

- When starting, reduce the mealtime insulin dose by 50%. Inject before meals.

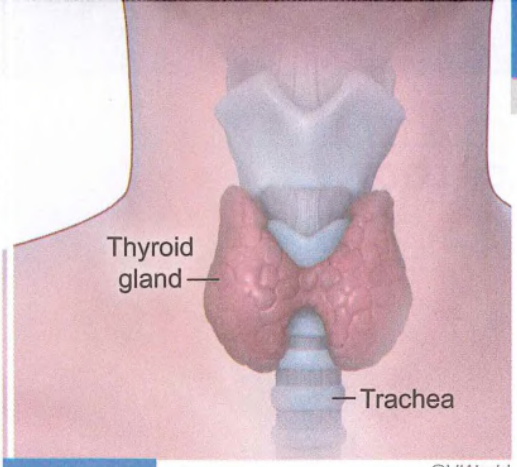
ALPHA GLUCOSIDASE INHIBITORS

- Can cause flatulence and diarrhea.
- Do not cause hypoglycemia. If you develop hypoglycemia (from another medication), treat with glucose tablets or gel.

Select Guidelines/References

American Diabetes Association (ADA). Standards of Medical Care in Diabetes–2025. Diabetes Care 2025;48 (suppl 1):S1-S352.

AACE Consensus Statement on the Comprehensive Type 2 Diabetes Management Algorithm - Executive Summary. *Endocr Pract.* 2020 Jan;26(1):107-139.



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CHAPTER 45

THYROID DISORDERS

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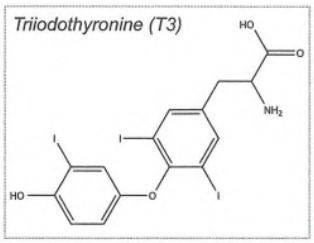
= Study Tip Gal = Key Drugs Guy

BACKGROUND

The thyroid gland is located in the neck, below the Adam's apple and in front of the trachea. The gland is shaped like a butterfly, with two symmetrical lobes. The lobes sit on each side of the trachea, connected by tissue called the isthmus. The thyroid gland produces thyroid hormones, which regulate metabolism, including the chemical processes needed to maintain life: cardiac and nervous system functions, body temperature, muscle strength, skin dryness, menstrual cycles, weight and cholesterol levels. Hyperthyroidism (overactive thyroid) and hypothyroidism (underactive thyroid) are common thyroid disorders.

PATHOPHYSIOLOGY



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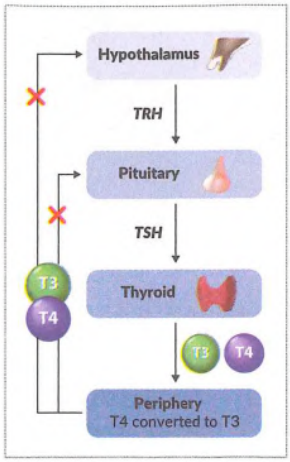
The two hormones made by the thyroid gland are triiodothyronine, known as T3, and thyroxine, known as T4. The thyroid gland is the only organ that can absorb iodine, which is required for the production of both hormones (see T3 structure). T3 is primarily formed from the breakdown of T4. A small percentage (< 20%) is produced by the thyroid gland directly. T3 is more potent than T4 but has a shorter half-life.

Thyroid hormone production is regulated by thyroid-stimulating hormone (TSH), also referred to as thyrotropin. TSH is secreted by the pituitary gland, which is located in the brain and regulates growth and development.

NEGATIVE FEEDBACK LOOP

Feedback loops regulate the production of hormones secreted by the pituitary and thyroid glands, such as T3 and T4. When the level of circulating (free) T4 increases, it inhibits the secretion of TSH. Less TSH decreases T4 production.

T3 and T4 are transported in the blood and are largely bound to proteins. Free T4 (FT4) is the unbound, active form that is monitored in patients with thyroid disorders.



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TRH = Thyrotropin Releasing Hormone
TSH = Thyroid-Stimulating Hormone

HYPOTHYROIDISM

Hypothyroidism is an insufficiency of T4 and, consequently, an elevation in TSH. Hypothyroidism occurs more often in females (~80% of cases) and with increased age. When T4 decreases, the body slows down and symptoms of low metabolism (e.g., fatigue, weight gain) appear. Hypothyroidism can cause depression, infertility, cardiovascular disease and other symptoms related to slow metabolism (see Study Tip Gal below).

S/SX OF HYPOTHYROIDISM

- Cold intolerance/sensitivity
- Dry skin
- Fatigue
- Muscle cramps
- Voice changes
- Constipation
- Weight gain
- Goiter (possible; can be due to low iodine intake)
- Myalgias
- Weakness
- Depression
- Bradycardia
- Coarse hair or loss of hair
- Menorrhagia (heavy menstrual periods)
- Memory and mental impairment

The most common cause of hypothyroidism is Hashimoto's disease, an autoimmune condition in which a patient's own antibodies attack the thyroid gland. Drugs and conditions can cause hypothyroidism (see Key Drugs Guy).

Myxedema coma is an uncommon but potentially fatal complication of hypothyroidism that can occur when hypothyroidism is untreated for a long time, or when hypothyroidism decompensates. It is a life-threatening emergency characterized by decreased circulation, hypothermia and hypometabolism. The treatment for myxedema coma is IV levothyroxine.

DIAGNOSIS

A diagnosis of hypothyroidism is made using two laboratory test results:

- Low free T4: normal range 0.9 – 2.3 ng/dL
- High TSH: normal range 0.3 – 3 mIU/L

Consider screening in patients age > 60 years.

MONITORING

Thyroid function tests include TSH, FT4 and total T3. TSH is the primary test to monitor thyroid function in those receiving thyroid hormone replacement (and occasionally FT4). The TSH level and symptoms should be monitored every 4 – 6 weeks until levels are normal, then 4 – 6 months later, then yearly. It is important to monitor thyroid function as the patient ages because a reduction in thyroid hormone replacement dose can be required. Too high of a thyroid hormone replacement dose in older adults can cause hyperthyroidism, atrial fibrillation and fractures. Serum FT4 is monitored in addition to TSH in central hypothyroidism (rare), which is a defect in pituitary production of TSH. FT4 is also monitored when treating hypothyroidism in pregnancy.

SELECT DRUGS AND CONDITIONS THAT CAN CAUSE HYPOTHYROIDISM

KEY DRUGS

Remember: **I TALC**

Interferons*

Tyrosine kinase inhibitors (e.g., sunitinib)

Amiodarone*

Lithium

Carbamazepine

Conditions:
Hashimoto's Disease

Others:

Oxcarbazepine

Eslicarbazepine

Phenytoin

Conditions:
Iodine deficiency

Pituitary failure

Surgical removal of thyroid gland

Congenital hypothyroidism

Thyroid gland ablation with radioactive iodine

External irradiation

**Can also cause hyperthyroidism (see Hyperthyroidism section)*

DRUG TREATMENT

The goals of treatment are to resolve symptoms, achieve euthyroid state (i.e., normal levels of thyroid hormones) and avoid over-treatment. Patients should be counseled on symptoms of both hypo- and hyperthyroidism. Levothyroxine (T4) is the drug of choice for hypothyroidism. A consistent preparation (i.e., same formulation and manufacturer) is preferred to minimize variability between refills. Some patients state they feel better using other thyroid hormone formulations, including liothyronine (T3) or desiccated thyroid (T3 and T4), although these are generally not recommended. Desiccated thyroid is called "natural thyroid" and is dosed in grains. It is not recommended because it can contain variable amounts of T3 and T4.

Levothyroxine has many drug interactions and unique administration recommendations due to binding; see table on the next page and Drug Interactions section.

Iodine supplementation with kelp or other iodine-containing functional foods is not necessary in the U.S. because most table salt has iodine added (iodized salt). This has eliminated almost all U.S. cases of iodine deficiency goiter. Individuals who are restricting salt intake can consume foods high in iodine (e.g., dairy, seafood, meat, some breads) and can take a multivitamin containing iodine.

HYPOTHYROIDISM TREATMENT

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Levothyroxine (T4) ***(Synthroid, Levoxyl, Unithroid,*** *Euthyrox, Tirosint, Tirosint-SOL)* Capsule, tablet, injection, oral solution Drug of choice Check the therapeutic equivalence of a generic to a brand in the *Orange Book*. Not all generic levothyroxine formulations are A-rated to various brands.	Full replacement dose = 1.6 mcg/kg/day (IBW) Start with full replacement dose in otherwise healthy, young (age < 50 years) patients with markedly ↑ TSH Start with partial replacement dose in milder hypothyroidism and those with comorbidities If CAD, start at 12.5-25 mcg daily Older adults often need 20-25% less (e.g., < 1 mcg/kg/day)	**BOXED WARNING** Ineffective and potentially toxic when used for obesity or weight reduction, especially in euthyroid patients; high doses can cause serious, life-threatening toxic effects, particularly when used with some anorectic drugs (e.g., sympathomimetic amines) **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Uncorrected adrenal insufficiency **WARNINGS** Use lower initial dose in cardiovascular disease (chronic hypothyroidism predisposes to CAD), ↓ bone mineral density which can lead to osteoporosis **SIDE EFFECTS** Hyperthyroid symptoms can occur when the dose is too high: ↑ HR, palpitations, sweating, weight loss, arrhythmias, irritability **MONITORING** TSH levels and clinical symptoms every 4-6 weeks until levels are normal, then 4-6 months later, then yearly; serum FT4 in select patients **NOTES** Highly protein bound (> 99%) Dose reduction may be needed as the patient ages **Levothyroxine PO** Take with water at the same time each day for consistent absorption, at least 60 minutes before breakfast or at bedtime (at least three hours after the last meal) Levothyroxine tablet colors are standard; they do not change between manufacturers (see Study Tip Gal on tablet colors) **Levothyroxine IV** IV to PO ratio is 0.75:1; use immediately upon reconstitution **Levothyroxine PO solution** Can be given undiluted or diluted (in water only); store in original container **Thyroid, Desiccated USP** Natural porcine-derived thyroid that contains both T3 and T4; less predictable potency and stability **Liothyronine** Shorter half-life causes fluctuations in T3 levels
Thyroid, Desiccated USP (T3 and T4) ***(Armour Thyroid,*** *Nature-Throid, Westhroid, NP Thyroid, WP Thyroid)* Tablet	Start 15-30 mg daily (15 mg in cardiac disease); titrate in 15 mg increments Usual dose is 60-120 mg daily	
Liothyronine (T3) ***(Cytomel,*** *Triostat*)* Tablet, injection	Start 25 mcg daily; titrate in 12.5-25 mcg increments Usual dose is 25-75 mcg daily	
Liotrix (T3 and T4 in 1:4 ratio) *(Thyrolar*)* Tablet	Start 25 mcg levothyroxine/ 6.25 mcg liothyronine daily Usual dose is 50-100 mcg levothyroxine/12.5-25 mcg liothyronine	

**Brand discontinued but name still used in practice.*

LEVOTHYROXINE TABLET COLORS

Remember: **O**rangutans **W**ill **V**omit **O**n **Y**ou **R**ight **B**efore **T**hey **B**ecome **L**arge, **P**roud **G**iants.

25 mcg – orange
50 mcg – white (no dye)
75 mcg – violet
88 mcg – olive
100 mcg – yellow
112 mcg – rose
125 mcg – brown
137 mcg – turquoise
150 mcg – blue
175 mcg – lilac
200 mcg – pink
300 mcg – green

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DRUG INTERACTIONS

DRUGS THAT ↓ THE EFFECT OF THYROID HORMONE REPLACEMENT TREATMENT:

- Drugs that ↓ levothyroxine absorption:
  - Antacids and polyvalent cations including iron, calcium, aluminum or magnesium, multivitamins (with vitamins ADEK, folate, iron), cholestyramine, orlistat, sevelamer and sucralfate: separate by four hours from thyroid replacement therapy.
  - Sodium polystyrene sulfonate and patiromer: separate doses by three hours from thyroid replacement therapy.
  - Lanthanum: separate doses by two hours from thyroid replacement therapy.
- Estrogen, SSRIs and hepatic inducers ↓ thyroid hormone levels.
- Beta-blockers, amiodarone, propylthiouracil (PTU) and systemic steroids can ↓ the effectiveness of levothyroxine by ↓ the conversion of T4 to T3.
- Drugs that can cause protein-binding site displacement (e.g., phenytoin) because thyroid hormone is highly protein bound (> 99%).

THYROID HORMONE REPLACEMENT TREATMENT CAN CAUSE:

- ↑ effect of warfarin (e.g., ↑ PT/INR)
- ↓ levels of theophylline

KEY COUNSELING POINTS

See the Drug Formulations and Patient Counseling chapter for counseling language/layman's terminology.

LEVOTHYROXINE

- Drug interactions due to binding.
- Take this medication with water, 60 minutes before breakfast or at bedtime (at least three hours after your last meal). Take this medication every day, even if you feel well.
- If you get a prescription refill and your new pills look different, speak to the pharmacist.
- Tell your prescriber if you become pregnant; it is likely that your dose will need to be increased during pregnancy or if you plan to breastfeed.
- Requires regular blood work (at least annually).

HYPERTHYROIDISM

Hyperthyroidism (overactive thyroid or thyrotoxicosis) occurs when there is over-production of thyroid hormones. FT4 is high, TSH is low, and symptoms are nearly opposite of those seen in hypothyroidism. Hyperthyroidism can accelerate metabolism, causing weight loss, agitation, heat intolerance and other symptoms (see Study Tip Gal below).

Left untreated, hyperthyroidism can cause tachycardia, arrhythmias, heart failure and osteoporosis.

S/SX OF HYPERTHYROIDISM

- Heat intolerance or increased sweating
- Weight loss
- Agitation, nervousness, irritability, anxiety
- Palpitations and ↑ HR
- Fatigue and muscle weakness
- Frequent bowel movements or diarrhea
- Insomnia
- Tremor
- Thinning hair
- Goiter (possible)
- Exophthalmos (protrusion of eyeballs), diplopia
- Light or absent menstrual periods

CAUSES

The most common cause of hyperthyroidism is Graves' disease, which most commonly occurs in females age 30 – 50 years. Graves' disease is an autoimmune disorder (like Hashimoto's), but instead of destroying the thyroid gland, antibodies stimulate the thyroid to produce too much T4. Less common causes include thyroid nodules and thyroiditis (inflammation of the thyroid). Drug-induced causes of hyperthyroidism include iodine, amiodarone and interferons. Excess iodine increases the synthesis and release of thyroid hormone. Iodine-induced hyperthyroidism can be due to excess iodine in the diet or exposure to radiographic contrast media. Excessive doses of thyroid hormone can cause hyperthyroidism.

DRUG TREATMENT

Treatment involves antithyroid medications, surgery or destroying part of the gland via radioactive iodine (RAI-131). RAI-131 has been considered the preferred treatment in Graves' disease, but all three treatment options are effective and relatively safe. With any option, the patient can be treated with a beta-blocker first for symptom control (to reduce palpitations, tremors and tachycardia). Propylthiouracil (PTU) or methimazole can be used as a temporary measure until surgery is complete. It takes 1 – 3 months of treatment with high dose antithyroid medication to control symptoms. Once symptoms are controlled, the dose should be reduced to prevent hypothyroidism.

HYPERTHYROIDISM TREATMENT

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Thionamides: inhibit synthesis of thyroid hormones by blocking the oxidation of iodine in the thyroid gland; PTU also inhibits peripheral conversion of T4 to T3		
Propylthiouracil (PTU) Tablet	50-150 mg Q8H initially until euthyroid (higher doses for more severe hyperthyroidism), followed by dose reduction	**BOXED WARNINGS (PTU)** Severe liver injury and acute liver failure Pregnancy: PTU preferred in 1st trimester (due to increased risk of fetal abnormalities from methimazole) **WARNINGS** Hepatotoxicity, drug-induced lupus erythematosus (DILE), bone marrow suppression (rare, includes agranulocytosis), vasculitis **SIDE EFFECTS** GI upset, headache, rash (exfoliative dermatitis, pruritus), bleeding, fever, constipation, loss of taste/taste perversion, lymphadenopathy **MONITORING** FT4 and T3 every 4-6 weeks until euthyroid, TSH, CBC, LFTs, PT Patient must monitor for liver toxicity (abdominal pain, yellow skin/eyes, dark urine, nausea) and infection (fever, severe sore throat) **NOTES** Take with food to reduce GI upset Methimazole is the drug of choice (due to a lower risk of liver damage) except in certain situations, noted below PTU is preferred in thyroid storm and if methimazole is not tolerated Pregnancy: PTU is preferred in the 1st trimester (see Boxed Warning); methimazole can be used in the 2nd and 3rd trimesters (to ↓ the risk of liver toxicity from PTU)
Methimazole *(Tapazole*)* Tablet	Mild hyperthyroidism: 5 mg Q8H initially until euthyroid (↑ doses for more severe hyperthyroidism), then 5-15 mg daily	

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Iodides: temporarily inhibit secretion of thyroid hormones; T4 and T3 levels will be reduced for several weeks but effect will not be maintained		
Potassium iodide and iodine solution *(Lugol's Solution)* Oral solution	Preparation for thyroidectomy: 5-7 drops Q8H for 10 days prior to surgery (off-label)	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Hypersensitivity to iodide or iodine, dermatitis herpetiformis, nodular thyroid condition with heart disease, hypocomplementemic vasculitis **SIDE EFFECTS** Rash, metallic taste, sore throat/gums, GI upset, urticaria, hypo/hyperthyroidism with prolonged use **MONITORING** Thyroid function tests, s/sx of hyperthyroidism **NOTES** Dilute in a glass of water, juice, or milk; food or milk can ↓ GI upset SSKI is also used as an expectorant
Saturated solution of potassium iodide (SSKI) *(ThyroSafe)* Oral solution	Preparation for thyroidectomy: 1-2 drops Q8H for 10 days prior to surgery (off-label)	

**Brand discontinued but name still used in practice.*

POTASSIUM IODIDE USE AFTER EXPOSURE TO RADIATION

Potassium iodide (KI) blocks the accumulation of radioactive iodine in the thyroid gland, thus preventing thyroid cancer. Potassium iodide should be taken as soon as possible after radiation exposure on the advice of public health or emergency management personnel only. The correct dose must be used; higher doses do not offer greater protection. Refer to the CDC website for age-specific dosing based on the duration of radiation exposure (https://emergency.cdc.gov/radiation/ki.asp). Iodized salt and foods do not contain enough iodine to block radioactive iodine and are not recommended.

THYROID STORM

Thyroid storm is a life-threatening medical emergency characterized by decompensated hyperthyroidism that can be precipitated by infection, trauma, surgery, radioactive iodine treatment or non-adherence to antithyroid medication. It is important to recognize symptoms so that treatment can be implemented promptly (see Study Tip Gal).

S/SX OF THYROID STORM

- Fever (> 103°F)
- Tachycardia
- Tachypnea
- Dehydration
- Profuse sweating
- Agitation
- Delirium
- Psychosis
- Coma

DRUG TREATMENT

- Antithyroid drug (PTU preferred; 500 – 1,000 mg loading dose, then 250 mg PO Q4H)

  PLUS

- Inorganic iodide such as SSKI 5 drops PO Q6H or *Lugol's Solution* 4 – 8 drops PO Q6 – 8H

  PLUS

- Beta-blocker (e.g., propranolol 40 – 80 mg PO Q6H)

  PLUS

- Steroid (e.g., dexamethasone 2 – 4 mg PO Q6H)

  PLUS

- Aggressive cooling with cooling blankets, acetaminophen and supportive treatment (e.g., antiarrhythmics, insulin, fluids, electrolytes)

The antithyroid drug should be given ≥ 1 hour before iodide to block thyroid hormone synthesis. PTU tablets can be crushed and given via an NG tube if needed.

THYROID DISEASE AND PREGNANCY

PREGNANCY AND HYPOTHYROIDISM

Untreated maternal hypothyroidism is associated with loss of pregnancy, low birth weight, premature birth and lower IQ in children. Levothyroxine is safe in pregnancy and is the recommended treatment. Pregnant people treated with thyroid hormone replacement will require a 30 – 50% increase in dose through the course of pregnancy and for several months after giving birth. Aggressive control of hypothyroidism in pregnancy is recommended. Treatment should ideally be started prior to the pregnancy.

PREGNANCY AND HYPERTHYROIDISM

Poor control of hyperthyroidism in pregnancy is associated with pregnancy loss, prematurity and low birth weight, like hypothyroidism, as well as thyroid storm, maternal hypertension and congestive heart failure. There can be lasting effects in the baby, including seizure disorders and neurobehavioral disorders. Pregnancy should be postponed until a stable euthyroid state is reached. If a person with hyperthyroidism becomes pregnant, determine if treatment can be stopped (mild disease). If treatment is needed, it should be with antithyroid drugs based on the trimester. For the first trimester, PTU should be used (due to fetal toxicity with methimazole). After that, the decision is individualized, as both PTU and methimazole carry potential risks. Historically, the patient would be switched to methimazole for the remainder of the pregnancy.

Select Guidelines/References

2016 American Thyroid Association Guidelines for Diagnosis and Management of Hyperthyroidism and Other Causes of Thyrotoxicosis. Thyroid. 2016;26(10):1343-1422.

Guidelines for the Treatment of Hypothyroidism: Prepared by the American Thyroid Association Task Force on Thyroid Hormone Replacement. Thyroid. 2014;24(12):1670-1751.

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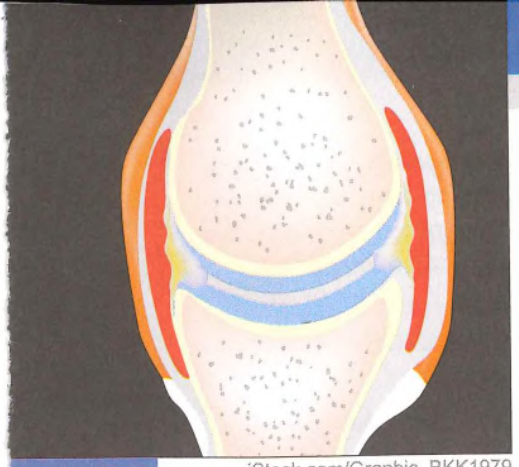

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CHAPTER 46

SYSTEMIC STEROIDS & AUTOIMMUNE CONDITIONS

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SYSTEMIC STEROIDS

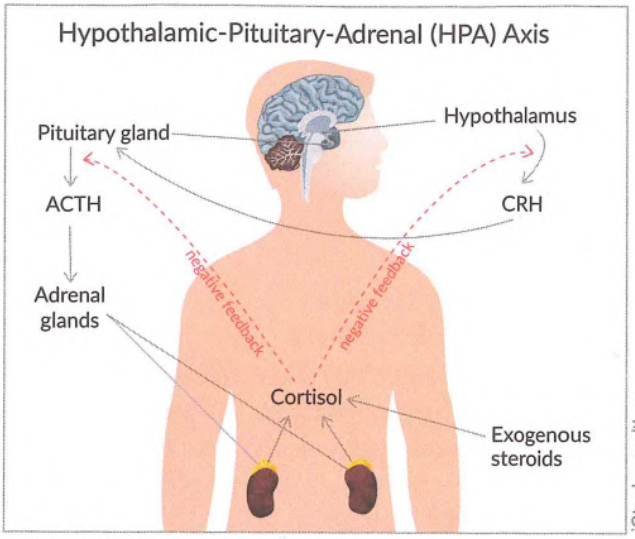
There are several drug classes used to treat inflammation, including drugs that target the chemical pathway of inflammation (e.g., biologics), cancer drugs with strong anti-inflammatory properties, steroids and NSAIDs. Steroids and NSAIDs are used commonly. Of these two classes, steroids are stronger anti-inflammatory drugs. Both have serious adverse effects, but chronic use of NSAIDs is considered to be safer than chronic use of steroids. See the Pain chapter for a review of NSAIDs.

Steroids are used for a variety of conditions, such as inflammatory conditions (e.g., psoriasis, acute asthma exacerbation) and immunosuppression post-transplant. They can also be used to treat adrenal insufficiency; when the adrenal glands fail to produce sufficient amounts of naturally occurring (i.e., endogenous) steroids, systemic steroids can be given as replacement therapy. Two endogenous steroids that can require replacement are:

- Cortisol: replaced by giving any of the steroids.
- Aldosterone: replaced by giving fludrocortisone.

Hydrocortisone, cortisone and prednisolone are commonly used as adrenal hormone replacement therapy. These have more glucocorticoid activity (i.e., anti-inflammatory effects) than fludrocortisone, which has mineralocorticoid activity (i.e., maintains water and electrolyte balance). Fludrocortisone mimics aldosterone and is used to treat Addison disease and sometimes orthostatic hypotension.

The rest of this chapter discusses only glucocorticoids, which will be referred to as "steroids." Systemic steroids can cause the adrenal gland to stop producing cortisol through feedback inhibition. This is called suppression of the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis (see diagram below). When long-term steroids are discontinued, they need to be tapered off to give the adrenal glands time to resume cortisol production.



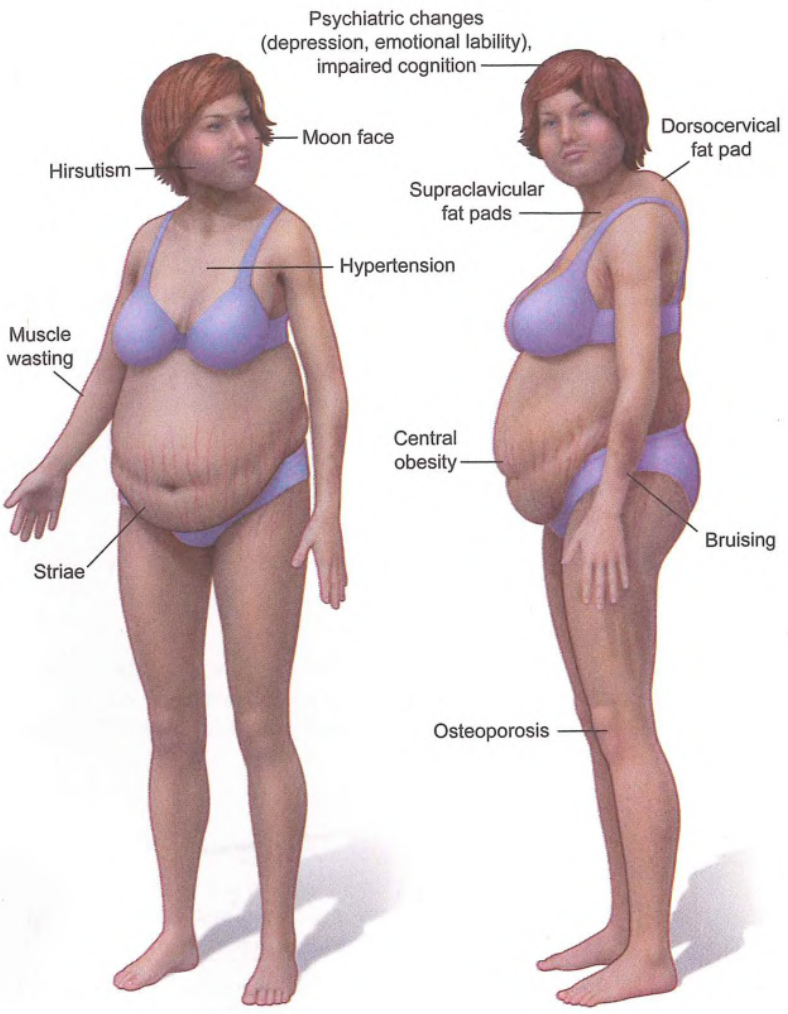
CRH = Corticotropin Releasing Hormone;
ACTH = Adrenocorticotropic Hormone, also called corticotropin

CUSHING SYNDROME

Cushing syndrome can develop when the adrenal glands produce too much cortisol, or if exogenous (i.e., taken as a drug) steroids are taken in doses higher than the normal amount of endogenous cortisol. See the diagram on the next page for the adverse effects of long-term steroids and Cushing syndrome.

Addison disease can be thought of as the opposite of Cushing. In Addison disease, the adrenal gland does not make enough cortisol. If exogenous steroids are suddenly stopped, it can cause an adrenal crisis (also known as an "Addisonian Crisis)." Hallmarks of an adrenal crisis are volume depletion and hypotension, which can be fatal.

Features of Cushing syndrome



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WAYS TO REDUCE SYSTEMIC STEROID RISKS

- Use every other day dosing; this decreases Cushing-like side effects.
- For joint inflammation, use intra-articular injections (i.e., inject into the joint).
- For GI conditions, use a steroid with low systemic absorption (e.g., delayed-release budesonide).
- For treatment of asthma, use inhaled steroids that mainly stay in the lungs.
- For conditions that require long-term steroids (e.g., transplant, a severe autoimmune condition), use the lowest effective dose for the shortest possible time.

SYSTEMIC STEROIDS (PO, IV) DOSE EQUIVALENCE

Cortisone	25 mg	Short-acting
Hydrocortisone	20 mg	
Prednisone	5 mg	Intermediate-acting
Prednisolone	5 mg	
Methylprednisolone	4 mg	
Triamcinolone	4 mg	
Dexamethasone	0.75 mg	Long-acting & highest potency
Betamethasone	0.6 mg	

STEROIDS: LEAST POTENT TO MOST POTENT

Remember: Cute Helpful Pharmacists and Physicians Marry Together & Deliver Babies

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GLUCOCORTICOIDS (SYSTEMIC STEROIDS)

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Dexamethasone *(Decadron*, Dexamethasone Intensol,* others) **Hydrocortisone** ***(Solu-Cortef,*** *Cortef, Alkindi Sprinkle)* **Methylprednisolone** ***(Medrol, Solu-Medrol,*** *Depo-Medrol)* **Prednisone** *(Prednisone Intensol, Rayos)* **Prednisolone** ***(Orapred ODT,*** *Millipred*, Pediapred)* **Triamcinolone** ***(Kenalog,*** *Pro-C-Dure* kits) Betamethasone *(Celestone Soluspan)* Cortisone	Dosing varies by condition Many formulations: liquids, ODT, injections [fast-acting, long-acting (usually for joints)], tablets, others If once daily, take between 7-8 AM to mimic the natural diurnal cortisol release Take oral doses with food to decrease GI upset	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Live vaccines, serious systemic infections **WARNINGS** Adrenal suppression: HPA axis suppression can lead to adrenal crisis, death; if used > 14 days, must taper slowly Immunosuppression, psychiatric disturbances, Kaposi sarcoma; can worsen heart failure, diabetes, hypertension and osteoporosis **SIDE EFFECTS** **Short-term side effects (used < 1 month)** Fluid retention, stomach upset, emotional instability (euphoria, mood swings, irritability), insomnia, ↑ appetite, weight gain, acute ↑ blood glucose/BP (with higher doses) **Long-term side effects** ↑ cholesterol (TG and LDL), s/sx of Cushing Syndrome (see previous figure) **MONITORING** BP, blood glucose, lipid panel, weight, appetite, mood, growth (children/adolescents), bone mineral density, electrolytes, infection, intraocular pressure if > 6 weeks **NOTES** Cortisone is a prodrug of cortisol Prednisone is a prodrug of prednisolone Methylprednisolone is available in a therapy pack (commonly called a *"Medrol* Dose Pack," see Study Tip Gal on next page) and as an injection Prednisolone is used often in children (many formulations)

Topical steroids are discussed in the Common Skin Conditions chapter.
**Brand discontinued but name still used in practice.*

CASE SCENARIO

AS is a 30-year-old female who came to the hospital with an acute flare of Crohn's disease. She was started on *Solu-Medrol* 40 mg IV BID. The medical team is now ready to transition her to oral prednisone at an equivalent dose. Assuming the IV:PO ratio of *Solu-Medrol* is 1:1, what is the equivalent daily dose?

$$\frac{\text{Methylprednisolone 4 mg}}{\text{Prednisone 5 mg}} = \frac{\text{Methylprednisolone 80 mg}}{\text{Prednisone X mg}}$$

$$X = 100 \text{ mg Prednisone}$$

IMMUNOSUPPRESSION FROM STEROIDS

A patient is immunosuppressed when using ≥ 2 mg/kg/day or ≥ 20 mg/day of prednisone or prednisone equivalent (see potency table) for > 2 weeks.

For these patients:

- Avoid live vaccines due to risk of infection.
- Taper when discontinuing steroids due to HPA axis suppression (to allow the adrenal gland to resume normal cortisol production); otherwise, the patient is at risk for adrenal crisis.

There are many ways to taper steroids; one method is to reduce the dose by ~10-20% every few days. Taper lengths vary depending on the condition being treated.

TREATING ACUTE INFLAMMATION WITH STEROIDS

Give a high dose initially (to quickly reduce inflammation), then taper the dose down to treat the remaining inflammation while preventing a rebound attack.

The ***Medrol* therapy pack*** provides a convenient taper kit, with 21 x 4 mg tablets:

DAY	BEFORE BREAKFAST	LUNCH	DINNER	BEDTIME
Day 1	2 tablets	1 tablet	1 tablet	2 tablets
Day 2	1 tablet	1 tablet	1 tablet	2 tablets
Day 3	1 tablet	1 tablet	1 tablet	1 tablet
Day 4	1 tablet	1 tablet	---	1 tablet
Day 5	1 tablet	---	---	1 tablet
Day 6	1 tablet	---	---	---

**Not appropriate for all patients (e.g., may need a longer taper or higher starting dose)*

AUTOIMMUNE CONDITIONS

Autoimmune diseases occur when the immune system attacks and destroys healthy tissue. Symptoms vary based on the type of autoimmune disease and the location of the immune response. Common symptoms of most autoimmune diseases include fatigue, pain and weakness. Nonspecific laboratory blood tests to detect inflammation include erythrocyte sedimentation rate (ESR), C-reactive protein (CRP), rheumatoid factor (RF) and anti-nuclear antibody (ANA).

Rheumatoid arthritis (RA), systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE), multiple sclerosis (MS), celiac disease, Sjögren's syndrome, Raynaud's, myasthenia gravis and psoriasis are discussed in this chapter. Other autoimmune diseases covered elsewhere in the book include type 1 diabetes (see the Diabetes chapter) and Hashimoto's thyroiditis and Graves' disease (see the Thyroid Disorders chapter).

TREATMENT

Treatment of autoimmune diseases typically involves drugs that suppress the immune system (e.g., steroids, disease-modifying antirheumatic drugs). Strong immunosuppressants can increase the risk of certain conditions, including:

- Reactivation of tuberculosis or hepatitis (B or C): testing and treatment (if needed) must be done prior to starting immunosuppressive drugs.
- Viruses: if required, live vaccines should be given prior to starting immunosuppressive drugs.
- Lymphomas and certain skin cancers: these cancer types are normally suppressed by a competent immune system.
- Infections of various types (e.g., bacterial, fungal): this requires monitoring of symptoms, complete blood counts (CBC) and infection control measures.

RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS

Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is a chronic, progressive autoimmune disorder that primarily affects joints. Other organs, including the kidneys, eyes, heart and lungs can be affected. RA varies in severity, with some patients having more aggressive disease than others.

CLINICAL PRESENTATION

RA typically results in warm, tender, swollen and painful joints. Articular (i.e., joint) pain usually presents in the smaller joints of the fingers, wrist, ankles and feet first. Bilateral, symmetrical inflammation with pain is consistent with an RA diagnosis, in contrast to osteoarthritis (OA), which presents unilaterally.

The classic symptoms of RA are shown in the box to the right. RA is a systemic disease and has systemic symptoms (e.g., fever, weakness, loss of appetite). Stiffness and pain are worse after rest, which is why "morning stiffness" is a common complaint. In contrast, OA does not cause prolonged stiffness. Diagnosis depends on a combination of signs, symptoms, lab tests and X-rays.

Joint pain and swelling are common to both types of arthritis, making it challenging to identify the specific type of arthritis causing the symptoms. Joint erosion and rheumatoid nodules can be absent in early RA. Anti-citrullinated peptide antibody (ACPA) and rheumatoid factor (RF) are useful laboratory tests for diagnosing RA. RF has a lower specificity for RA (see the Biostatistics chapter) and can be positive due to another autoimmune disorder.

NON-DRUG TREATMENT

Non-drug treatments include rest, physical therapy, occupational therapy, exercise, diet modifications, weight control and surgical intervention (e.g., joint replacement).

Hands with rheumatoid arthritis

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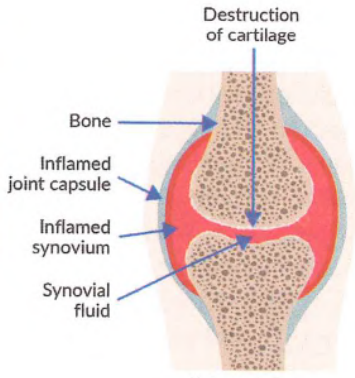
CLASSIC JOINT SYMPTOMS OF RA

Swelling	Weakness
Pain	Difficult to move
Stiffness	Edema
Bone deformity	Redness

Joint pain occurring in various joints



Enlarged view of a joint

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DRUG TREATMENT

RA is classified as low, moderate or high disease activity. Patients with symptomatic RA should be started on a disease-modifying antirheumatic drug (DMARD), regardless of the severity. DMARDs slow the disease process and prevent further joint damage; remission or low disease activity is the treatment goal. Methotrexate (MTX) is the preferred initial therapy for most patients. For patients with moderate or high disease activity despite MTX (with or without a systemic steroid), a combination of DMARDs, a tumor necrosis factor (TNF) inhibitor biologic or non-TNF biologic, with or without MTX, is recommended. Never use two biologic DMARDs in combination due to the risk of serious (fatal) infections.

For patients with moderate or high disease activity, low-dose steroids (i.e., ≤ 10 mg/day of prednisone or equivalent) can be added as a "bridging" option while waiting for the DMARD to take effect, or in the case of DMARD failure. Steroids are commonly used in RA flares and should be used at the lowest dose and for the shortest duration possible. NSAIDs are a less toxic, weaker option than steroids for bridging, but high doses are necessary for their anti-inflammatory effect and their toxicity (e.g., GI bleeding, CVD risk) must be considered.

TRADITIONAL (NON-BIOLOGIC) DISEASE-MODIFYING ANTIRHEUMATIC DRUGS (DMARDS)

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Methotrexate ***(Trexall,*** *Otrexup, Rasuvo, Xatmep)* *Trexall* is an oral tablet *Otrexup* and *Rasuvo* are single-dose (needle included) SC auto-injectors *Xatmep* is an oral solution for use in pediatric patients Injection (IV/IT) – for oncology use Irreversibly binds and inhibits dihydrofolate reductase, inhibiting folate, thymidylate synthetase and purine; has immune modulator and anti-inflammatory activity	7.5-20 mg once weekly (PO, SC, IM) Low weekly doses are used for RA; to avoid error, it is safest to take as a single dose (rather than divided oral dosages of 2.5 mg Q12H x 3 doses per week – see below) Never dose daily for RA; numerous incidences of adverse events (e.g., mouth sores, intestinal bleeding, liver damage) have occurred due to patients taking daily	**BOXED WARNINGS** Hepatotoxicity, myelosuppression, mucositis/stomatitis, pregnancy (teratogenic), acute renal failure, pneumonitis, GI toxicity, dermatologic reactions, malignant lymphomas, potentially fatal opportunistic infections; renal and lung toxicity are more likely when using higher oncology doses **CONTRAINDICATION** Pregnancy, breastfeeding, alcohol use disorder, chronic liver disease, blood dyscrasias, immunodeficiency syndrome **SIDE EFFECTS** Vary by route and dosage N/V/D, ↑ LFTs, stomatitis, alopecia, photosensitivity, arthralgia, myalgia **MONITORING** CBC, LFTs (at baseline, every 2-4 weeks for first 3 months or following dose increases, every 8-12 weeks for 3-6 months, then less frequently), chest X-ray, hepatitis B and C serologies (if at high risk), SCr, PFTs (if lung-related symptoms), TB test **NOTES** Folate can be given to ↓ hematological, GI and hepatic side effects; give 5 mg PO weekly on the day following MTX administration (some take 1 mg daily on non-MTX days) *Xatmep* requires no preparation; eliminates the need for needles or crushing or splitting tablets

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Hydroxychloroquine *(Plaquenil)* Tablet +/- MTX Immune modulator	400-600 mg/day initially, then 200-400 mg/day for maintenance dose Take with food or milk	**WARNINGS** Irreversible retinopathy, cardiomyopathy, QT prolongation, myopathy, neuropathy, hypoglycemia, psychiatric events (e.g., suicidal behavior), renal toxicity (related to phospholipidosis) **SIDE EFFECTS** Vision changes (dose-related), N/V/D, abdominal pain, rash, pruritus, pigmentation changes of the skin and hair (rare), bone marrow suppression (anemia, leukopenia, thrombocytopenia), hemolysis with G6PD deficiency, hepatotoxicity, headache **MONITORING** CBC, LFTs and ECG at baseline and periodically; eye exam and muscle strength at baseline and every 3 months **NOTES** ↓ liver toxicity than MTX; alternative if concern for liver disease Monotherapy: if low disease activity and symptoms < 2 years If inadequate response after 6 months, consider alternative
Sulfasalazine *(Azulfidine, Azulfidine EN-tabs)* Tablet (immediate and delayed release) +/- MTX Immune modulator	500-1,000 mg/day initially, then 1,000 mg BID (max is 3 grams/day) Take with food and 8 oz of water to prevent crystalluria	**CONTRAINDICATION** Sulfa or salicylate allergy, GI or GU obstruction, porphyria **WARNINGS** Blood dyscrasias, severe skin reactions (SJS/TEN), hepatic failure, pulmonary fibrosis; use caution with G6PD deficiency **SIDE EFFECTS** Headache, rash, anorexia, dyspepsia, N/V/D, oligospermia (reversible), folate deficiency, arthralgia, crystalluria **MONITORING** CBC and LFTs (baseline, then every 2 weeks for first 3 months, then monthly for 3 months, then every 3 months), renal function **NOTES** Can cause yellow-orange coloration of skin/urine Impairs folate absorption, can give 1 mg/day folate supplement

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Leflunomide *(Arava)* Tablet +/- MTX Inhibits pyrimidine synthesis resulting in anti-proliferative and anti-inflammatory effects Prodrug of teriflunomide	100 mg PO × 3 days, then 20 mg PO daily (can use 10 mg PO daily if unable to tolerate 20 mg) May omit loading dose if at higher risk of liver toxicity or myelosuppression	**BOXED WARNINGS** Pregnancy (teratogenic): rule out prior to starting therapy Hepatotoxicity: avoid if pre-existing liver disease, ALT > 2× ULN **CONTRAINDICATION** Pregnancy, severe hepatic impairment, use with teriflunomide **WARNINGS** Severe infections, serious skin reactions (SJS/TEN), peripheral neuropathy, interstitial lung disease, hypertension Upon discontinuation, use accelerated drug elimination procedure (below) to ↓ levels of active metabolite, teriflunomide **SIDE EFFECTS** ↑ LFTs, nausea, diarrhea, respiratory infections, rash, headache **MONITORING** LFTs and CBC at baseline and monthly for first 6 months, BP at baseline and regularly; screen for TB, pregnancy before starting **NOTES** Accelerated drug elimination options: 1. Cholestyramine 8 g PO TID × 11 days (use 4 g if 8 g dose not tolerated) 2. Activated charcoal 50 g PO Q12H × 11 days Use two forms of birth control during treatment; if pregnancy desired, wait 2 years after discontinuation or use accelerated drug elimination procedure
Janus kinase inhibitors: inhibit janus kinase (JAK) enzymes, which stimulate immune cell function		
Tofacitinib *(Xeljanz, Xeljanz XR)* Tablet +/- non-biologic DMARDs (MTX)	5 mg PO BID XR: 11 mg PO daily Dose adjustments with moderate-strong CYP3A4 inducers and hepatic or renal impairment	**BOXED WARNINGS** Serious infections including tuberculosis (TB), fungal, viral, bacterial or other opportunistic infections; screen for active and latent TB and treat before starting Malignancy: ↑ risk for lymphomas and other malignancies Thrombosis: ↑ risk of serious (fatal) blood clots, including pulmonary embolism, deep vein thrombosis, arterial thrombosis Mortality and major adverse cardiovascular events: ↑ risk in patients age ≥ 50 years with ≥ 1 cardiovascular risk factor **WARNINGS** GI perforation, ↑ LFTs, hematologic toxicity, avoid live vaccines **SIDE EFFECTS** Upper respiratory tract infections (URTIs), urinary tract infections (UTIs), diarrhea, HA, hypertension, ↑ lipids **MONITORING** CBC (for lymphopenia, neutropenia, anemia) and lipids at baseline, then 4-8 weeks later, then every 3 months, LFTs (at baseline and periodically thereafter), abdominal pain, infection **NOTES** Do not use with biologic DMARD or potent immunosuppressant Caution in patients of Asian descent (↑ frequency of side effects) Do not start if: absolute lymphocyte count < 500 cells/mm^3, Hgb < 8 g/dL (< 9 g/dL for tofacitinib), ANC < 1,000 cells/mm^3
Baricitinib *(Olumiant)* Tablet +/- non-biologic DMARDs (MTX)	2 mg PO daily GFR < 30 mL/min/1.73 m^2: not recommended	
Upadacitinib *(Rinvoq)* Tablet +/- non-biologic DMARDs (MTX)	15 mg daily	

METHOTREXATE DRUG INTERACTIONS

- MTX should not be taken with alcohol due to an ↑ risk of liver toxicity.
- Renal elimination is ↓ by aspirin, NSAIDs, beta-lactams and probenecid. Caution if using together.
- Sulfonamides and topical tacrolimus ↑ adverse effects of MTX. Avoid using together.
- MTX can ↓ effectiveness of loop diuretics; loop diuretics can ↑ MTX concentration. Caution if using together.

ANTI-TNF BIOLOGIC DMARDS

Tumor necrosis factor (TNF) alpha inhibitors (anti-TNF biologics) are used for a variety of diseases; recommended dosing may vary. Dosing for RA is below. Each drug has a pregnancy registry to track potential risks to the fetus.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Etanercept *(Enbrel)** Single-dose prefilled syringe or auto-injector, multidose vial +/- MTX	50 mg SC weekly	**BOXED WARNINGS** Serious infections, some fatal, including TB, fungal, viral, bacterial; screen for latent TB (and treat if needed) prior to therapy Lymphomas and other malignancies **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Active systemic infection; > 5 mg/kg in heart failure (infliximab), sepsis (etanercept) **WARNINGS** Can cause demyelinating disease, hepatitis B reactivation, heart failure, lupus-like syndrome, hepatotoxicity, seizures, myelosuppression and severe infections Do not use with other biologic DMARD or live vaccines **SIDE EFFECTS** Infections, injection site reactions (redness, rash, swelling, itching, bruising), positive anti-nuclear antibodies, HA, nausea, ↑ CPK (adalimumab) **MONITORING** Prior to initiation: screen for TB and HBV (HBsAg, anti-HBc) Routine: signs of infection, CBC, LFTs, HBV, TB (annually if risk factors for TB are present), symptoms of heart failure, malignancies, vitals (during infliximab infusion) **NOTES** Do not shake or freeze; requires refrigeration (biologics denature if hot); allow to reach room temp before injecting (15-30 mins); etanercept and adalimumab can be stored at room temp for up to 14 days; do not refrigerate once warmed MTX is 1st line and anti-TNF biologics are add-on therapy; however, if initial presentation is severe, they can be started as initial therapy (+/- MTX) Antibody induction can occur and ↓ effect Rotate injection sites
Adalimumab *(Humira, Humira Pen)** Single-dose prefilled syringe or auto-injector +/- MTX	40 mg SC every other week (if not taking MTX, can ↑ to 40 mg SC weekly)	
Infliximab *(Remicade)** Injection (IV) + MTX	3 mg/kg IV at weeks 0, 2 and 6, then every 8 weeks (can ↑ dose or treat every 4 weeks, but infection risk will ↑) Requires a filter; stable in NS only Infusion reaction: fever, chills, ↓BP (premedicate with acetaminophen, antihistamine, steroid) Delayed hypersensitivity reaction 3-12 days after administration (fever, rash, myalgia, HA)	
Certolizumab pegol *(Cimzia, Cimzia Starter Kit)* Single-dose prefilled syringe and vial starter kit +/- MTX	400 mg SC at weeks 0, 2 and 4, then 200 mg SC every other week (or 400 mg every 4 weeks)	
Golimumab *(Simponi, Simponi Aria)* Single-dose prefilled syringe or auto-injector (SC), injection (IV) + MTX	SC *(Simponi)*: 50 mg monthly IV *(Simponi Aria)*: 2 mg/kg infused over 30 minutes at weeks 0 and 4, then every 8 weeks IV golimumab requires a filter	

See the table at the end of this chapter for a list of biosimilar products.

OTHER BIOLOGIC DMARDS (NON-TNF INHIBITORS)

These biologics affect the immune system by mechanisms other than TNF inhibition. Safety data on the use of non-TNF biologics in pregnancy is limited. Pregnant patients exposed to these drugs are encouraged to register in a pregnancy exposure registry.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Rituximab ***(Rituxan)**** Injection (IV) + MTX Depletes CD20 B-cells believed to have a role in RA development and progression	1,000 mg IV on day 1 and day 15 (in combination with MTX for both doses) Can repeat treatment if needed at 16-24 weeks Premedicate with a steroid, acetaminophen and antihistamine Start infusion at 50 mg/hr; can ↑ by 50 mg/hr every 30 minutes if no reaction (max 400 mg/hr) Gently invert the IV bag to mix the solution, do not shake	**BOXED WARNINGS** Serious, and fatal, infusion-related reactions (usually with first infusion), progressive multifocal leukoencephalopathy (PML) due to JC virus (can be fatal), serious skin reactions (SJS/TEN) HBV reactivation, some cases resulting in fulminant hepatitis, hepatic failure and death; screen high-risk groups for HBV and HCV prior to initiating therapy; monitor for clinical and laboratory signs (HBsAg, anti-HBc) several months after treatment **WARNINGS** Infection; do not give with other biologic DMARD or live vaccines **SIDE EFFECTS** In patients treated for RA: infusion-related reactions, URTIs, UTIs, N/V/D, peripheral edema, weight gain, hypertension, headache, angioedema, fever, insomnia, pain **MONITORING** ECG, vitals, infusion reactions, CBC, SCr, electrolytes, screen for HBV before treatment
Anakinra *(Kineret)* Single-dose prefilled syringe +/- MTX IL-1 receptor antagonist; IL-1 mediates immunologic reactions in RA; not recommended first-line per guidelines	100 mg SC daily (same time each day) CrCl < 30 mL/min: 100 mg SC every other day	**WARNINGS** Malignancies and serious infections, discontinue if a serious infection develops, screen for TB prior to initiating therapy, do not give with other biologics or live vaccines **SIDE EFFECTS** URTIs, headache, N/D, abdominal pain, injection site reactions, antibody development, arthralgias **MONITORING** CBC, SCr, signs of infection **NOTES** Do not shake or freeze; refrigerate and protect from light Give only after failure of one or more DMARDs
Abatacept *(Orencia, Orencia ClickJect)* Single-dose prefilled syringe or auto-injector (SC), injection (IV) +/- MTX Inhibits T-cell activation by binding to CD80 and CD86 on antigen presenting cells (blocking interaction with CD28)	IV: 500-1,000 mg (based on TBW) at 0, 2 and 4 weeks, then every 4 weeks Infuse over 30 minutes SC: 125 mg weekly SC with IV loading dose: give first IV dose as above, then 125 mg SC within 24 hours, then 125 mg SC weekly	**WARNINGS** Same warnings as above for anakinra plus: caution in patients with COPD – may worsen symptoms **SIDE EFFECTS** HA, nausea, injection site reactions, infections, nasopharyngitis, antibody development **MONITORING** Signs of infection, hypersensitivity **NOTES** Stable in NS only Requires a filter and light protection during administration; do not shake

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Tocilizumab *(Actemra, Actemra ACTPen)**	IV: 4 mg/kg every 4 weeks given over 60 minutes (can ↑ to 8 mg/kg)	**BOXED WARNING** Serious infections, discontinue if a serious infection develops, screen for TB prior to initiating therapy **WARNINGS** ↑ LFTs, neutropenia and thrombocytopenia, GI perforation, can cause demyelinating diseases, hypersensitivity reactions, lipid abnormalities, do not give with other biologic DMARDs or live vaccines **SIDE EFFECTS** URTIs, headache, hypertension, injection site reactions, ↑ LDL and total cholesterol **MONITORING** LFTs, CBC (baseline, 4-8 weeks after start of therapy, then every 3 months), lipid panel, infection **NOTES** Do not use SC injection for IV infusion; SC products contain polysorbate 80 Do not start if: ALT or AST > 1.5× ULN, ANC < 2,000 cells/mm^3, or platelets < 100,000 cell/mm^3
Single-dose prefilled syringe (SC), injection (IV) +/- MTX IL-6 receptor antagonist; IL-6 mediates immunologic reactions in RA	Max dose per infusion: 800 mg SC: If < 100 kg: 162 mg every other week (can ↑ to weekly) If ≥ 100 kg: 162 mg weekly	
Sarilumab *(Kevzara)* Single-dose prefilled syringe +/- MTX IL-6 receptor antagonist	200 mg SC every 2 weeks	

**See the table at the end of this chapter for a list of biosimilar products.*

KEY COUNSELING POINTS

See the Drug Formulations and Patient Counseling chapter for counseling language/layman's terminology.

METHOTREXATE

- Dosed once weekly for rheumatoid arthritis and psoriasis. Do not use daily or double-up doses. Choose a day of the week to take your medication that you can remember.
- Can cause:
  - ☐ Liver damage.
  - ☐ Infection.
  - ☐ Mouth sores.
  - ☐ Stomach bleeding, if used with aspirin/NSAIDs.
- Avoid in pregnancy (teratogenic). Use an effective form of birth control, whether you are male or female.
- Avoid alcohol.
- Take folic acid to decrease side effects.

METHOTREXATE AUTO-INJECTORS:

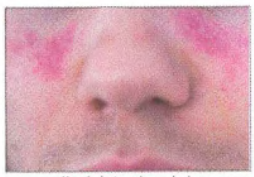
- Administer by subcutaneous injection into the abdomen (two inches away from the navel) or upper thigh only. Do not inject in the arms or any other areas of the body.
- Pinch the skin and inject at a 90° angle. Press firmly until you hear a click. Hold three seconds for *Otrexup* and five seconds for *Rasuvo*.
- Needles are included with single-dose subcutaneous auto-injector products and do not need to be purchased separately.

ADALIMUMAB, ETANERCEPT AND GOLIMUMAB

- Administer by subcutaneous injection as prescribed (once weekly for etanercept, every 1 – 2 weeks for adalimumab, monthly for golimumab).
- Can cause:
  - ☐ Injection site reactions.
  - ☐ Infection.
  - ☐ Liver damage.
  - ☐ Heart failure.
- Store the medication (single-dose syringes or multidose vials) in the refrigerator with protection from light and sources of heat.
- Etanercept and adalimumab can be stored at room temperature for a maximum of 14 days. Allow the medication to warm to room temperature before injecting.
- For adalimumab: inject SC into the abdomen or thigh.
- For etanercept syringe or auto-injector: inject SC into the abdomen, thigh or upper arm.
- For golimumab: inject SC into the abdomen, thigh or upper arm.
- Needles are included with single-dose SC auto-injector products and do not need to be purchased separately.

SYSTEMIC LUPUS ERYTHEMATOSUS

BACKGROUND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Systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE) is an autoimmune disease commonly referred to as lupus. SLE primarily affects young females, with a female-to-male ratio of 10:1.

SLE predominantly occurs in people 15 – 45 years old and is more common in females of African-American or Asian descent. Patients experience flare-ups of varying degrees, as well as periods of disease remission. The mechanism of SLE is unknown, but sunlight, certain drugs and viral infections can cause the disease. As the disease progresses, it can affect the heart, lungs, kidneys and brain. Drug-induced lupus erythematosus (DILE) has similar clinical and laboratory features as SLE, but often resolves within weeks of drug discontinuation (see Key Drugs Guy).

CLINICAL PRESENTATION

Most individuals with SLE develop a distinct, flat, red rash across the nose bridge and cheeks called a malar rash, commonly known as a "butterfly rash" because of its shape. It is not usually painful or itchy. Exposure to sunlight can aggravate the facial rash and worsen the inflammation in other organs. Other common symptoms include fatigue, depression, anorexia, weight loss, muscle pain, discoid rash, photosensitivity and joint pain and stiffness (e.g., arthritis).

Arthritis and cutaneous manifestations are most common, but renal, hematologic and neurologic manifestations contribute largely to morbidity and mortality. Lupus nephritis (kidney disease) develops in over 50% of patients with SLE. Common laboratory findings may include positive autoantibodies, such as:

- Antinuclear antibodies (ANA)
- Anti-single stranded DNA (anti-ssDNA)
- Anti-double stranded DNA (anti-dsDNA)
- Antiphospholipid antibodies

Patients may have low complement (C3, C4, CH50) and elevated acute phase reactants (ESR, CRP).

SELECT DRUGS THAT CAN CAUSE DRUG-INDUCED LUPUS ERYTHEMATOSUS (DILE)

Methimazole	**A**nti-TNF drugs
Propylthiouracil	**T**erbinafine
Methyldopa	**I**soniazid
Minocycline	**Q**uinidine
Procainamide	Remember: **M**y **P**retty
Hydralazine	**M**alar **M**arking **P**robably **H**as **A** **T**rans**l**ent **Q**uality

NON-DRUG TREATMENT

Non-drug treatment consists of balancing rest and exercise to manage fatigue. Smoking cessation is encouraged since tobacco smoke can be a trigger for flares. Photosensitivity is common and is a risk with some treatments; sunscreens and sun protection/avoidance are required.

DRUG TREATMENT

Depending on disease severity, patients with SLE may require one or more immunosuppressants or cytotoxic drugs to control the disease. Steroids are often used acutely in severe cases to induce immunosuppression and halt tissue injury. Patients with mild disease are generally controlled with hydroxychloroquine alone, while patients with more severe disease require additional medications, such as cyclophosphamide, azathioprine, mycophenolate mofetil, cyclosporine or belimumab. In some cases, it may take up to six months to see maximal benefit from treatment. Select medications are discussed here, other drugs are discussed elsewhere (see the Transplant, Oncology and Inflammatory Bowel Disease chapters).

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
IgG1-lambda monoclonal antibody: reduces the activity of B-cell mediated immunity; prevents B lymphocyte survival by blocking the binding of B lymphocyte stimulator protein (BLyS) to receptors on B lymphocytes		
Belimumab *(Benlysta)* Single-dose prefilled syringe or auto-injector (SC), injection (IV) Approved for SLE and lupus nephritis	IV: 10 mg/kg every 2 weeks × 3 doses, then every 4 weeks Infuse over 1 hour Consider pre-medication for infusion reactions and hypersensitivity reactions SC: 200 mg once weekly	**WARNINGS** Serious (sometimes fatal) infections, PML, malignancy, acute hypersensitivity reactions, psychiatric events, do not give with other biologic DMARDs or live vaccines **SIDE EFFECTS** Nausea, diarrhea, fever, depression (including suicidal ideation), insomnia **NOTES** Crosses the placenta - caution with use in pregnancy
IgG1-kappa monoclonal antibody: blocks the activity of type 1 interferon receptors		
Anifrolumab *(Saphnelo)* Injection Approved for SLE	IV: 300 mg every 4 weeks Infuse over 30 minutes using an in-line filter	**WARNINGS** Infections (bring up to date with vaccines prior to starting), malignancy, hypersensitivity reactions, do not give with other biologic DMARDs or live vaccines **NOTES** Crosses the placenta - caution with use in pregnancy
Calcineurin inhibitor: suppresses immune system by inhibiting T-lymphocyte activation		
Voclosporin *(Lupkynis)* Capsule Approved for lupus nephritis	23.7 mg BID in combination with steroids and mycophenolate	**BOXED WARNINGS** Serious (sometimes fatal) infections, malignancy **WARNINGS** Nephrotoxicity, neurotoxicity, hypertension, red cell aplasia, QT prolongation, hyperkalemia, do not give with live vaccines **SIDE EFFECTS** Hypertension, diarrhea, headache, anemia, cough, UTI, abdominal pain, dyspepsia, fatigue, renal impairment **NOTES** Avoid use in pregnancy; breastfeeding is not recommended by the manufacturer

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

BACKGROUND

Multiple sclerosis (MS) is a chronic, progressive autoimmune disease in which the patient's immune system attacks the myelin sheath, the fatty substance that surrounds nerve fibers of the brain and spinal cord axons. As demyelination progresses, nerves can no longer properly conduct electrical impulses, leading to impaired motor and autonomic function.

CLINICAL PRESENTATION

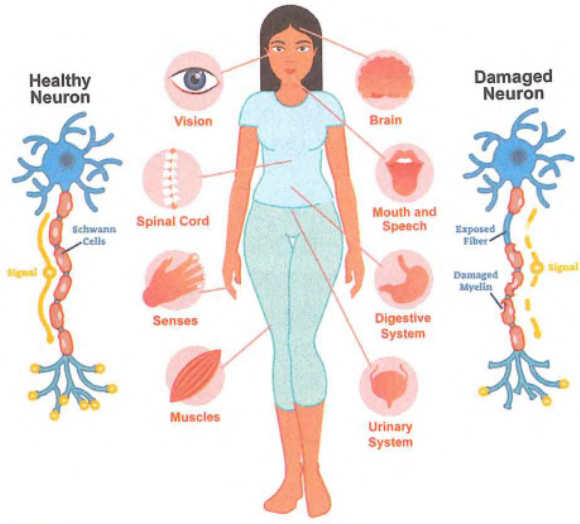
The presentation of MS is highly variable, with some patients having a much more aggressive course while others have occasional discrete attacks. Most patients experience periods of disease activity followed by intervals of remission (relapsing-remitting MS). Others can have a progressive decline in function (primary or secondary progressive MS).

Early symptoms include fatigue, weakness, tingling, numbness and blurred vision. As the condition worsens, patients can experience cognitive decline, muscle spasms, pain, bladder spasticity, depression, heat sensitivity, sexual dysfunction, difficulty walking with gait instability and visual disturbances.

If left untreated, about 30% of patients will develop significant physical disability. Patients with primary progressive MS generally have the worst prognosis. Symptoms are characterized as:

- Primary: muscle weakness
- Secondary: result from primary symptoms, such as incontinence due to muscle impairment
- Tertiary: psychological and social concerns

MS is more common in females (ratio 2:1); however, males are more likely to have more progressive illness. The typical onset is between 20 – 40 years of age. Frequency of symptoms, spinal or brain lesions on magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), spinal fluid analysis and evoked potentials (tests that measure electrical conduction of the brain) are used to diagnose MS. A primary goal of therapy is prevention of disease progression; what is lost in neuronal function cannot be regained.



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TREATMENT

Treating MS requires a holistic approach, including functional rehabilitation, an anti-inflammatory diet, supporting emotional health and vocational and cognitive rehabilitation. Physical and occupational therapy support motor function, swallowing and speech. Medications are used to modify disease, treat relapses and manage symptoms. Steroids are used to treat relapses, usually as 3 – 7 days of IV methylprednisolone +/- an oral steroid taper.

DISEASE-MODIFYING THERAPIES

Disease-modifying therapies (DMTs) reduce the frequency and severity of relapses. Many different drugs are used for the treatment of MS, though the mechanism of these drugs is often not well defined. The selection of a drug is based on patient factors (e.g., disease severity, insurance, comorbidities), route of administration, efficacy and adverse effects.

Interferon beta formulations and glatiramer acetate are parenteral drugs that were once the mainstay of treatment for patients with relapsing forms of MS, and both are still preferred in patients of childbearing potential who are trying to conceive. Pegylated interferon beta allows for more convenient SC dosing every 14 days. When the medication is supplied as a single-dose prefilled syringe, auto-injector or vial kit for SC injection, needles are included with the device and do not require a separate purchase.

Oral DMTs, such as fingolimod, diroximel fumarate and ozanimod are often used as initial treatment for patients with relapsing remitting MS. Other options include specific monoclonal antibodies (e.g., ofatumumab, ocrelizumab) and chemotherapy drugs (e.g., cladribine). Mitoxantrone is a chemotherapeutic drug approved for MS, though it is rarely used due to its risks and availability of alternative drugs (see the Oncology chapter). Monoclonal antibodies and chemotherapy drugs are considered second- or third-line options for most relapsing remitting MS patients due to the risk of significant toxicities, though these may be used first-line for patients with more aggressive MS.

A few injectable drugs are supplied as a powder that requires reconstitution, and some of these contain albumin. Some patients will not wish to use, or cannot use, albumin-containing products.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Glatiramer acetate: an immune modulator thought to activate T-lymphocyte suppressor cells in relapsing MS		
Glatiramer acetate *(Copaxone, Glatopa)* Prefilled syringes 20 and 40 mg/mL concentrations are not interchangeable	20 mg SC daily or 40 mg SC 3 times per week (at least 48 hours apart)	**BOXED WARNING** Anaphylaxis: may occur any time during treatment (first dose to years) **WARNINGS** Chest pain, immediate post-injection reaction, lipoatrophy **SIDE EFFECTS** Injection site reactions (inflammation, erythema, pain, pruritus, residual mass), flushing, diaphoresis, dyspnea, infection, pain, weakness, rash, anxiety, nausea, nasopharyngitis, vasodilation, antibody development **NOTES** Preferred drug if treatment is necessary during pregnancy Check solution for discoloration and discard if present Can keep at room temperature for up to 1 month, or in the refrigerator (preferred); if cold, let stand at room temp for 20 min prior to injecting If an optional auotinjector is used for administration, patients should make sure it is compatible with their specific product by referring to the package labeling (increased risk for medication errors)
Interferon beta products: alter expression and response to surface antigens, enhancing immune cell function		
Interferon beta-1a *(Avonex, Avonex Pen, Rebif, Rebif Rebidose)* Powder (for reconstitution), prefilled syringe and auto-injector	*Avonex:* 30 mcg IM weekly *Rebif:* 22 mcg or 44 mcg SC three times per week (at least 48 hours apart)	**WARNINGS** Psychiatric disorders (depression/suicide), injection site necrosis, myelosuppression, ↑ LFTs, thyroid dysfunction (hyper- or hypo-), infections, anaphylaxis, worsening cardiovascular disease, seizure risk **SIDE EFFECTS** Flu-like symptoms following administration (lasting minutes to hours); ↓ with continued treatment – can use acetaminophen or NSAIDs prior to injection or start with lower doses and titrate weekly to target dose Visual disturbances, fatigue, depression, pain, UTI, HA **MONITORING** LFTs, CBC (at 1, 3 and 6 months, then periodically); thyroid function every 6 months (if thyroid dysfunction or as clinically necessary) **NOTES** Refrigerate all except *Betaseron* and *Extavia* (can be stored at room temperature). If refrigerated, let stand at room temp prior to injection. Do not expel the air bubble in prefilled syringes due to loss of dose. Do not shake *Avonex, Betaseron* or *Extavia* Some formulations contain albumin which can ↑ the risk of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease transmission (rare); avoid in albumin-sensitive patients
Interferon beta-1b *(Betaseron, Extavia)* Powder (for reconstitution), and auto-injector	SC: 0.25 mg every other day (use within 3 hrs of reconstitution)	
Peginterferon beta-1a *(Plegridy, Plegridy Starter Pack)* Prefilled syringe and auto-injector	SC: 63 mcg on day 1, 94 mcg on day 15, then 125 mcg every 14 days starting on day 29	

DRUG	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Sphingosine 1-phosphate (S1P) receptor modulators: block lymphocytes from exiting lymph nodes, reducing lymphocytes in the periphery; may limit lymphocyte migration into the CNS	
Fingolimod *(Gilenya, Tascenso ODT)* Capsule, ODT Ozanimod *(Zeposia)* Capsule Ponesimod *(Ponvory)* Tablet Siponimod *(Mayzent)* Tablet Etrasimod *(Velsipity)* Tablet Approved for ulcerative colitis only	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Specific types of heart block, or any of the following in the past 6 months: MI, unstable angina, stroke, TIA or some HF (decompensation requiring hospitalization or Class III/IV) Ozanimod: severe untreated sleep apnea, concomitant use of an MAO inhibitor Siponimod: CYP2C9*3/*3 genotype (testing required before use) **WARNINGS** Can cause bradycardia, other bradyarrhythmias – use caution with other drugs that slow HR; patients starting fingolimod must be monitored for at least 6 hours after the first dose (ECG required at baseline, at end of observation period or if treatment course is interrupted) ↑ risk for infection (monitor CBC); screen for VZV antibodies, vaccinate if negative Other side effects: malignancy, macular edema (monitor with eye exams), hepatotoxicity (monitor LFTs), ↑ BP, ↓ lung function, fetal risk (use contraception during and for some time (7-90 days depending on drug) after stopping therapy if of childbearing potential **NOTES** MS can become much worse when treatment is stopped Unopened *Mayzent* is stored in the refrigerator, once opened can store at room temperature
Fumarates or Nuclear factor (erythroid-derived 2)-like 2 (Nrf2) activators: anti-inflammatory and cytoprotective	
Dimethyl fumarate *(Tecfidera)* Capsule Diroximel fumarate *(Vumerity)* Capsule Monomethyl fumarate *(Bafiertam)* Capsule	Hepatotoxicity (monitor LFTs), neutropenia (reversible, but monitor CBC), PML Can cause flushing (prevent with aspirin 30 minutes prior to dose and administer with food), GI side effects (less with *Vumerity)* Do not crush, chew or sprinkle capsule contents on food Monomethyl fumarate is the active metabolite of diroximel fumarate and dimethyl fumarate
Pyrimidine synthesis inhibitor: anti-inflammatory; may reduce the number of activated lymphocytes in the CNS	
Teriflunomide *(Aubagio)* Tablet	Hepatotoxicity and teratogenicity: contraindicated in pregnancy, severe hepatic impairment Can use accelerated elimination to remove drug (see leflunomide) Active metabolite of leflunomide
CD20-directed monoclonal antibodies	
Ofatumumab *(Kesimpta)* Injection (SC) *Arzerra* – for CLL Ublituximab *(Briumvi)* Injection (IV) Ocrelizumab *(Ocrevus)* Injection (IV)	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Active hepatitis B infection, screen before starting therapy **WARNINGS** ↑ risk of serious and potentially fatal infections (including PML), avoid live vaccinations during treatment, fetal risk, infusion reactions, reduction in immunoglobulin levels *Ocrevus:* immune-mediated colitis **NOTES** *Briumvi* and *Ocrevus:* indicated for relapsing forms of MS, premedicate with a steroid, antihistamine and/or acetaminophen *Ocrevus* requires a 0.22-micron in-line filter, has similar safety issues as other CD20-directed mAbs (e.g., rituximab)

DRUG	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Other monoclonal antibodies (various mechanisms)	
Alemtuzumab *(Lemtrada)* Injection (IV) *Campath* – for CLL CD52-directed cytolytic monoclonal antibody	**BOXED WARNINGS** REMS program required; serious, sometimes fatal, autoimmune conditions, infusion reactions, malignancies, stroke **CONTRAINDICATIONS** HIV (causes prolonged ↓ in CD4 count) **NOTES** Indicated when there is an inadequate response to ≥ 2 MS drugs Complete all vaccinations 6 weeks before treatment Premedicate with a steroid, an antihistamine and/or acetaminophen (varies by drug)
Natalizumab ***(Tysabri)**** Injection (IV) Monoclonal antibody that binds to the alpha-4 subunit of integrin molecules	**BOXED WARNINGS** Progressive multifocal leukoencephalopathy (PML); only available through the REMS TOUCH Prescribing Program **WARNINGS** Herpes encephalitis and meningitis, hepatotoxicity, hypersensitivity (antibody formation), immunosuppression/infections **SIDE EFFECTS** Infusion reactions, headache, fatigue, arthralgia, nausea, rash, depression, gastroenteritis, abdominal/back pain **NOTES** Administered every 4 weeks; cannot be used with other immunosuppressants Stable in NS only; do not shake
Oral anti-neoplastic	
Cladribine *(Mavenclad)* Tablet	Boxed warning for malignancies, teratogenicity Contraindicated in patients with current malignancy, HIV or active chronic infections Contraception must be used for males and females of reproductive potential during treatment and for 6 months after the last dose
Potassium channel blocker: may increase nerve signal conduction	
Dalfampridine *(Ampyra)* Tablet	Contraindicated in patients with a history of seizures Not disease-modifying, only increases walking speed Takes up to 6 weeks to show efficacy; most patients do not respond

**See the table at the end of this chapter for a list of biosimilar products.*

DRUGS USED FOR SYMPTOM CONTROL

Patients with MS may need a variety of medications for symptom control, such as anticholinergics for incontinence, laxatives for constipation, loperamide for diarrhea, skeletal muscle relaxants for spasms/spasticity or analgesics for muscle spasms and pain. Propranolol can help with tremor. For depression, many antidepressants can be used. An SNRI may be chosen to help with neuropathic pain. Fatigue is often treated with modafinil or stimulants (e.g., methylphenidate). Meclizine and scopolamine are used for dizziness and vertigo. Acetylcholinesterase inhibitors, including donepezil, can be used to help cognitive function. Erectile dysfunction can be treated with phosphodiesterase-5 inhibitors.

Know that drugs used for symptom control can worsen other symptoms. For example, anticholinergics can worsen cognitive function, as can drugs for vertigo and propranolol. Propranolol has added concerns for worsening depression and causing problems with sexual performance. The SSRI and SNRI antidepressants can worsen sexual dysfunction. Opioids will worsen constipation and can decrease cognition.

KEY COUNSELING POINTS

See the Drug Formulations and Patient Counseling chapter for counseling language/layman's terminology.

GLATIRAMER ACETATE

- Subcutaneous injection. Rotate injection sites.
- Available in two different doses; depending on your dose, inject daily or three times a week ≥ 48 hours apart. Administer consistently on the same three days each week.
- Can cause:
  - ☐ Injection site reactions.
  - ☐ Chest pain.
  - ☐ Shortness of breath and flushing.
- Store in the refrigerator before use; can be kept at room temperature for up to one month. Allow to warm to room temperature before injecting.

S1P RECEPTOR MODULATORS

- Can cause:
  - ☐ Liver damage.
  - ☐ Vision problems.
  - ☐ Serious infections.
  - ☐ Slowed heart rate.
- MS can become worse after stopping treatment.

INTERFERON BETA PRODUCTS

- Injected subcutaneously except for *Avonex* (IM).
- Can cause:
  - ☐ Injection site reactions.
  - ☐ Flu-like symptoms (e.g., fever, chills, myalgias); can use acetaminophen or NSAIDs for prevention prior to injecting.
  - ☐ New or worsening depression.
- *Betaseron* and *Extavia* may be stored at room temperature. All other interferons should be stored in the refrigerator prior to use. Allow drug to reach room temperature before injecting.

RAYNAUD'S PHENOMENON

Raynaud's is a common condition that is triggered by exposure to cold and/or stress, leading to vasospasm in the extremities (commonly the fingers and/or toes). The vasospasm causes the skin to turn white and then blue, which is followed by painful swelling when the affected areas warm and can result in amputation in severe cases. Laboratory findings that can signify other autoimmune conditions are generally absent.

Prevention and treatment involve vasodilation to improve blood flow to the affected areas. The calcium channel blocker (CCB) nifedipine is commonly used for prevention but other CCBs can be used. Additional drugs used for vasodilation include iloprost, topical nitroglycerin and phosphodiesterase-5 inhibitors. See Study Tip Gal below.

DRUG-INDUCED RAYNAUD'S

↓ blood flow to fingers causes ↑ cyanosis (bluish fingers) and pain

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Fingers become white due to lack of blood flow

Fingers turn blue as vessels dilate to keep blood in tissues

Fingers finally turn red as blood flow returns

Drugs that cause or worsen Raynaud's:

Beta-blockers

Bleomycin, cisplatin

Sympathomimetics (from vasoconstriction): amphetamines, pseudoephedrine, illicit drugs (e.g., cocaine, methamphetamine)

CELIAC DISEASE

BACKGROUND

Celiac disease (celiac sprue) is an immune response to gluten, a protein found in wheat, barley and rye. The primary and most effective treatment is to avoid gluten entirely. Gluten is present in many foods, food additives and drug excipients. Pharmacists can assist patients in avoiding gluten-containing drugs, as even a small exposure will trigger a reaction. The FDA permits food products to be labeled "gluten-free" only if the food contains less gluten than 20 parts per million.

Gluten protein

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CLINICAL PRESENTATION

Common symptoms are diarrhea, abdominal pain, bloating and weight loss. Constipation is more common in children. In celiac disease, antibodies attack and damage the lining of the small intestine, which can lead to vitamin and nutritional deficiencies due to decreased absorption. Other complications include small bowel ulcers, amenorrhea, infertility and an increased risk of cancer (primarily lymphomas). Almost all cases respond to dietary changes, although avoiding gluten entirely is challenging.

Dermatitis herpetiformis is an extremely itchy, blistery skin rash with chronic eruptions that occurs in 20 – 25% of patients with celiac disease, more often in males. The rash can be present with or without overt intestinal symptoms and is often mistaken for eczema or psoriasis, which leads to a delay in diagnosis and treatment.

GLUTEN IN MEDICATIONS

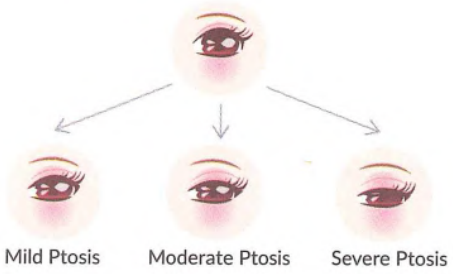
The FDA has strict regulations on active ingredients in drug formulations, but there is little oversight for the excipients, making the identification of gluten difficult. Active drugs are gluten-free, but excipients may contain gluten. Generic formulations may contain different excipients than the brand.

Package inserts might contain information on the excipient components. Look for the keyword "starch," which will be either corn, potato, tapioca or wheat. If the package insert lists "starch" alone, the manufacturer must be consulted to determine if the starch is wheat. The manufacturer might report that they do not use gluten in the manufacturing process, but they cannot state whether the excipients purchased from outside vendors are gluten-free. The risk of cross-contamination is low but not absent, and this information should be provided to the patient. It is ultimately up to the patient, hopefully in consultation with the prescriber, whether to take the drug or not.

MYASTHENIA GRAVIS

BACKGROUND

Myasthenia gravis (MG) is an autoimmune condition that attacks the connections between nerves and muscles, often leading to weakness in the muscles that control the eyes, face, neck and limbs. In most cases, the immune system targets acetylcholine (ACh) receptors. Symptoms include eye/vision changes [e.g., double vision (diplopia), drooping eyelid (ptosis)], difficulty chewing or swallowing and jaw or neck weakness.



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DRUGS THAT CAN WORSEN MYASTHENIA GRAVIS

Drugs can worsen or unmask MG. These drugs should be avoided or used cautiously in patients with MG:

- Select antibiotics (e.g., aminoglycosides, quinolones, macrolides)
- Magnesium salts
- Select antiarrhythmics
- Beta-blockers and calcium channel blockers
- Select antipsychotics
- Muscle relaxants
- Botulinum toxin

TREATMENT

Pyridostigmine, a cholinesterase inhibitor, is the mainstay of treatment for MG. Immunotherapy (e.g., steroids, azathioprine, cyclosporine, methotrexate) may be used for patients who remain symptomatic on pyridostigmine or who need long-term MG treatment. Some cases may require a thymectomy (removal of the thymus gland), plasmapheresis or intravenous immunoglobulin (IVIG).

Eculizumab *(Soliris)* is an injectable complement inhibitor approved for the treatment of MG in adults who are ACh receptor-antibody positive; this drug can increase the risk of meningococcal infections and has a REMS program that must be followed (e.g., up to date on meningococcal vaccinations).

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Cholinesterase inhibitor: blocks the breakdown of acetylcholine by acetylcholinesterase, which improves neuromuscular transmission and increases muscle strength		
Pyridostigmine *(Mestinon)* Tablet IV and IM forms used for myasthenia gravis crisis, nerve gas exposure and reversal of nondepolarizing muscle relaxants	60-1,500 mg/day (usually 600 mg/day) divided into 5-6 doses	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Mechanical intestinal or urinary obstruction **WARNINGS** Cholinergic effects: symptoms of excess ACh can occur (e.g., salivation, lacrimation, urination, diarrhea) - see the Basic Science Concepts chapter CVD, glaucoma, bronchospastic disease (COPD or asthma)

SJÖGREN'S SYNDROME

Sjögren's syndrome is an autoimmune disease most often characterized by severe dry eyes and dry mouth. Many other symptoms can be associated with Sjögren's (e.g., thyroiditis, Raynaud's phenomenon, neuropathy, lymphadenopathy). Sjögren's syndrome can be primary or secondary (e.g., associated with another autoimmune disease, such as RA or SLE). Dry mouth and dry eyes are a source of significant morbidity and can lead to complications, such as dental caries, corneal ulceration and chronic oral infections. There is no known cure for Sjögren's; treatment focuses on reducing the symptoms of dry eyes and dry mouth.

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DRY EYES TREATMENT

The use of artificial teardrops is the primary treatment for xerophthalmia (i.e., dry eyes). Popular OTC artificial teardrops available are *Systane, Refresh, Clear Eyes* and *Liquifilm*. It may be necessary to try a different OTC eye drops before finding one that provides the most comfort. If the preservative (e.g., benzalkonium chloride) is irritating, preservative-free artificial tear drops packaged in individual use containers are available. If the eyes dry out while sleeping, an ointment is preferred.

When OTC products prove ineffective, there are several FDA-approved prescription options, including ophthalmic cyclosporine, loteprednol (a steroid) and lifitegrast. Patients should be instructed to monitor for a reduction in symptoms and a reduction in the use of OTC eye drops. Refer to the Drug Formulations and Patient Counseling chapter for detailed patient counseling information for eye drops.

EYE DROPS FOR DRY EYES

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Cyclosporine *(Restasis, Cequa, Verkazia, Vevye)* Ophthalmic emulsion, suspension	1 drop in each eye Q12H	**SIDE EFFECTS** Ocular: burning, stinging, redness, pain, blurred vision, foreign body sensation, discharge, itching eye **NOTES** Emulsion: prior to use, invert the vial several times to make uniform Counsel patients that it may take up to 3 – 6 months to notice an increase in tear production; use eye drops properly to avoid infection.
Lifitegrast *(Xiidra)* Ophthalmic	1 drop in each eye Q12H	**SIDE EFFECTS** Unusual taste, eye irritation, discomfort, blurred vision **NOTES** Store in the original foil pouch to protect from light

DRY MOUTH TREATMENT

Non-drug treatment for xerostomia (i.e., dry mouth) includes salivary stimulation using sugar-free chewing gum with xylitol or lozenges, and daily rinses with antimicrobial mouthwash. Salivary substitutes are available in lozenges, rinses, sprays and swabs *(Aquoral, Mouth Kote, Biotene Oral Balance)*. These contain carboxymethylcellulose or glycerin. If OTC treatments do not provide sufficient relief, prescription oral muscarinic agonists, such as pilocarpine *(Salagen)* or cevimeline *(Evoxac)*, can be used. These drugs are contraindicated in patients with uncontrolled asthma and narrow-angle glaucoma, due to cholinergic properties.

PSORIASIS

BACKGROUND

Psoriasis is a chronic, autoimmune disease that appears on the skin. There are several types of psoriasis. The most common is plaque psoriasis, which appears as raised, red patches covered with a silvery-white buildup of dead skin cells on any part of the body. Treatments can be divided into three main types: light therapy, topical and systemic medications. Most psoriasis is treated with topical medication and UV light therapy. Soaking can also help loosen and remove the plaques.

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NON-DRUG TREATMENT

Ultraviolet (UV) light exposure causes activated T-cells in the skin to die. This slows skin turnover and decreases scaling and inflammation. Brief, daily exposures to small amounts of sunlight can improve psoriasis, but intense sun exposure can worsen symptoms and cause skin damage. UVB phototherapy, in controlled doses from an artificial source, can improve mild to moderate psoriasis symptoms. Other non-drug treatments include photochemotherapy (e.g., ultraviolet A light with psoralen, a light sensitizer) and laser light therapy.

DRUG TREATMENT

There are many topical options for treating psoriasis, including steroids, a vitamin D analog (calcipotriene), anthralin, retinoids, salicylic acid (in medicated shampoo), coal tar, tapinarof and moisturizers. Calcipotriene, tazarotene and salicylic acid are used in combination with topical steroids. If these fail, topical calcineurin inhibitors *(Protopic, Elidel)* can be tried; these are the preferred drugs when applying to the face. Treatment for more severe symptoms can require immunosuppressants, including methotrexate, cyclosporine, hydroxyurea or immunomodulators (e.g., etanercept, infliximab, adalimumab, certolizumab). Newer systemic drugs approved for plaque psoriasis include apremilast and monoclonal antibodies that have IL-receptor antagonist actions.

TOPICAL PSORIASIS TREATMENT

DRUG/DRUG CLASS	COMMENTS
Steroids	Use high-potency steroids only short-term due to risk of side effects Can be used as monotherapy or with other therapies See Common Skin Conditions chapter
Coal Tar products *(DHS Tar, Ionil-T, Psoriasin, Pentrax Gold,* others) + salicylic acid *(Tarsum)* OTC Also used for dandruff and dermatitis	Coal tar products are messy, time-consuming and can stain clothing and bedding Topical formulations: cream, foam, emulsion, ointment, oil, shampoo, bar soap Do not use salicylic acid products with other salicylates as systemic absorption can occur Can cause skin irritation and photosensitivity
Tazarotene *(Tazorac)* – a topical retinoid + halobetasol *(Duobrii)*	See Common Skin Conditions chapter
Anthralin *(Zithranol)*	Keratolytic containing salicylic acid with irritant potential, ↑ contact time as tolerated up to 30 min
Calcipotriene *(Dovonex, Sorilux)* Cream, foam, ointment, solution + betamethasone *(Taclonex* ointment, *Enstilar* foam)	Vitamin D analog – contraindicated in hypercalcemia or vitamin D toxicity If using a suspension, shake well Do not apply to face, axillae or groin
Tapinarof *(VTAMA)* Cream	Most common side effects: folliculitis, nasopharyngitis, contact dermatitis, pruritis Wash hands after use

SYSTEMIC PSORIASIS TREATMENT

DRUG/DRUG CLASS	COMMENTS
Retinoid	
Acitretin Tablet	Boxed warning for hepatotoxicity and pregnancy (female must sign informed consent before dispensing) Used only in severe cases when patient is unresponsive to other therapies due to numerous contraindications and side effects
Phosphodiesterase-4 inhibitor	
Apremilast *(Otezla)* Tablet	Warnings: weight loss, depression and suicidal ideation Most common side effects: diarrhea, N/V, headache

DRUG/DRUG CLASS	COMMENTS
Interleukin receptor antagonists: monoclonal antibodies that bind and interfere with proinflammatory cytokines	
Brodalumab *(Siliq)* Bimekizumab *(Bimzelx)* Guselkumab *(Tremfya)* Ixekizumab *(Taltz)* Risankizumab *(Skyrizi)* Secukinumab *(Cosentyx)* Tildrakizumab *(Ilumya)* Ustekinumab *(Stelara)** All administered by SC injection	**WARNINGS** Like other monoclonal antibodies, these can cause serious infections (including active TB); screen for latent TB (and treat if needed) before starting; avoid live vaccines; may exacerbate Crohn's disease; latex hypersensitivity Brodalumab: boxed warning for suicidal ideation and behavior; REMS program **SIDE EFFECTS** Diarrhea and URTIs
Selective tyrosine kinase 2 inhibitor	
Deucravacitinib *(Sotyktu)* Tablet	**WARNINGS** May increase risk for infections, screen for latent TB (and treat if needed) before starting, avoid live vaccines; malignancy (including lymphomas); rhabdomyolysis, laboratory abnormalities (↑ triglycerides and liver enzymes) **SIDE EFFECTS** Upper respiratory infections, ↑ CPK, mouth ulcers, acne

**See table of biosimilar products below.*

BIOSIMILARS

Many biologic products have one or more biosimilar options (see the Drug Formulations and Patient Counseling chapter for more information). The following are a list of biosimilars for drugs in this chapter.

DRUG	BIOSIMILARS
Adalimumab *(Humira)*	*Abrilada, Amjevita, Cyltezo, Hadlima, Hulio, Hyrimoz, Idacio, Simlandi, Yuflyma, Yusimry*
Eculizumab *(Soliris)*	*Bkemv*
Etanercept *(Enbrel)*	*Erelzi, Eticovo*
Infliximab *(Remicade)*	*Avsola, Ixifi, Inflectra, Renflexis, Zymfentra*
Natalizumab *(Tysabri)*	*Tyruko*
Rituximab *(Rituxan)*	*Riabni, Ruxience, Truxima*
Tocilizumab *(Actemra)*	*Avtozma, Tofidence*
Ustekinumab *(Stelara)*	*Imuldosa, Otulfi, Pyzchiva, Selarsdi, Steqeyma, Yesintek, Wezlana*

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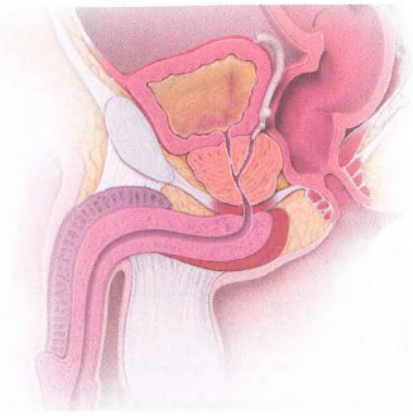
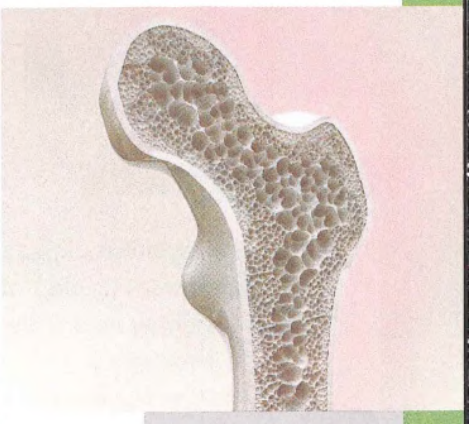
MALE & FEMALE HEALTH





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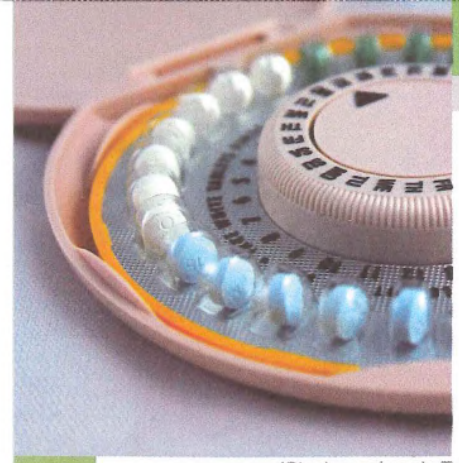

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CHAPTER 47

CONTRACEPTION & INFERTILITY

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= Study Tip Gal

BACKGROUND

Contraception is available in many different forms, including OTC and prescription options, and proper use is essential to prevent unintended pregnancy. With so many forms of contraception available, patient-specific factors should drive product selection. Pharmacists are uniquely positioned to enhance the appropriate use of contraceptive methods, improve access to contraception and prevent unintended pregnancies. In some states, pharmacists are authorized to prescribe contraception.

On the other hand, many people struggle with becoming pregnant. Infertility treatments can be invasive and expensive. Pharmacists (usually in specialty settings) play an essential role in gaining access to and assisting with the appropriate use of infertility treatments.

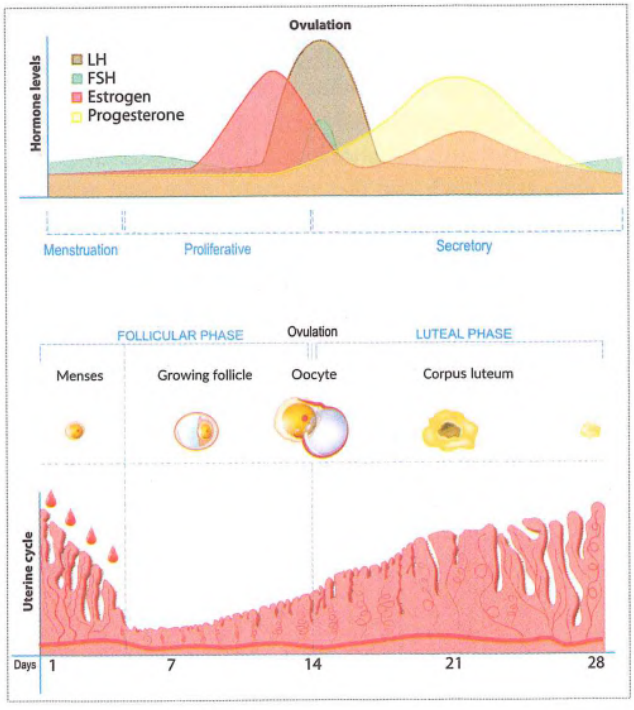
MENSTRUAL CYCLE PHASES

A normal menstrual cycle ranges from 23 – 35 days (average 28 days). The start of bleeding (menses) indicates that the next cycle has begun and is counted as day 1 of the cycle; the remnants of the previous cycle (the thick, bloody endometrial lining) are sloughing off. Menstruation typically lasts a few days. Changes in hormone levels cause the events that characterize the different phases of the menstrual cycle (see diagram). The follicular phase begins with the onset of menses, when the estrogen and progesterone levels start off low.

PHASES OF THE MENSTRUAL CYCLE

Follicular	Each follicle in an ovary contains an oocyte (immature egg). Follicle stimulating hormone (FSH) spurs follicle development and causes estrogen to surge. Estrogen peaks by the end of this phase.* The surge in estrogen causes luteinizing hormone (LH) and FSH to increase.
Ovulatory	The LH surge triggers ovulation 24-36 hours later. Ovulation is the release of the egg (ova) from the ovary.
Luteal	The start of ovulation begins the luteal (last) phase, during which the corpus luteum develops in the ovaries, and lasts ~14 days. Progesterone is dominant in this phase.*

**Estrogen and progesterone cause the endometrium (the lining of the uterus) to thicken to prepare for an embryo, and progesterone causes the cervical mucus to thicken and body temperature to increase. When estrogen and/or progesterone are low during the cycle, blood can drip off the lining, causing spotting.*



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FERTILITY AWARENESS

The mid-cycle luteinizing hormone (LH) surge results in release of the oocyte (egg) from the ovary into the fallopian tube. The oocyte lives for 24 hours once released, while sperm can survive for ~3 days. Ovulation kits predict the best time for intercourse based on ovulation in order to try to conceive (get pregnant). These kits test for LH in the urine and are positive if LH is present. A person wishing to conceive should have intercourse when the LH surge is detected, and for the following 2 days (as the LH surge typically occurs 24 – 36 hours prior to ovulation). Alternative methods to test for ovulation include monitoring body temperature and cervical mucus (discussed later with non-pharmacologic and OTC contraceptive methods).

PREGNANCY

Human chorionic gonadotropin (hCG) is released when a fertilized egg attaches to the lining of the uterus (called implantation). Detecting hCG in the urine or blood indicates pregnancy. A home urine test can detect pregnancy sooner if the woman tests the first urine in the morning, when the hCG level is highest.

PRECONCEPTION HEALTH

Preconception health focuses on steps to take to protect the health of a baby in the future. Any woman planning to conceive (and all women of childbearing age) should:

- Increase their folic acid (folate, vitamin B9) consumption from a combination of dietary supplements and fortified foods (e.g., dried beans, leafy green vegetables, oranges). Folate deficiency can cause birth defects of the brain and spinal cord (neural tube defects), which occur very early in pregnancy before many women know they are pregnant. Adults are recommended to take 400 mcg of dietary folate equivalents (DFE) per day, and this folate requirement increases during pregnancy to 600 mcg DFE/day.
- Stop smoking, using illicit drugs and drinking excessive amounts of alcohol.
- Keep vaccinations current. Attempt to avoid illnesses that will adversely affect the baby (e.g., toxoplasmosis).
- Avoid toxic chemicals, including drugs on the Hazardous Drugs List developed by NIOSH; see the Compounding chapters.
- Consult with a healthcare provider to evaluate the teratogenic potential of all current medications. Some may need to be stopped or switched to a safer alternative (See Drug Use in Pregnancy & Lactation chapter).

The general health of the male partner is also important.

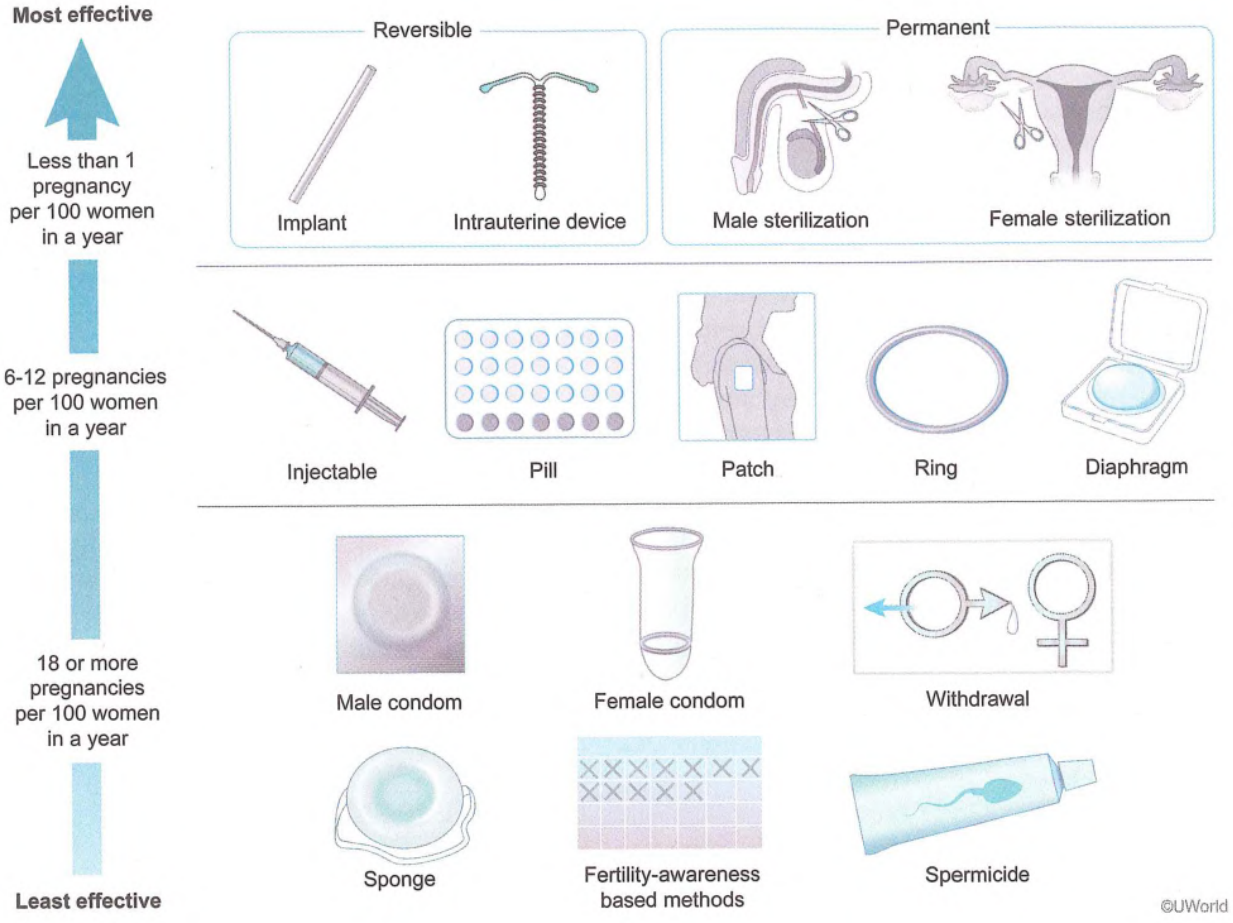
CONTRACEPTION

Contraception can be used until ready to conceive. A prompt return to fertility occurs when most contraceptives are discontinued. The only reversible contraceptive method that has a delay in return to fertility is the medroxyprogesterone injection.

Contraceptive preferences vary markedly with age. For women in their teens and 20s, hormonal contraception is preferred. Women ≥ 35 years of age often rely on sterilization, which can be performed immediately postpartum (following a birth). Male contraception options are limited. Presently, male condoms and vasectomy are the only options.

EFFECTIVENESS OF CONTRACEPTIVE METHODS

The figure below provides a comparison of the efficacy of contraceptive methods that are available as OTC or prescription products. Contraceptive methods, except for condoms, do not provide protection from sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Both male and female condoms provide protection from some STIs, including HIV.



NON-PHARMACOLOGIC AND OTC CONTRACEPTIVE METHODS

Abstinence is the only 100% effective way to prevent pregnancy and STIs. Other non-pharmacologic methods of contraception include temperature and cervical mucus tracking and the use of barrier methods.

TEMPERATURE AND CERVICAL MUCUS METHODS

Keeping track of body temperature and cervical mucus can be used primarily to avoid pregnancy by abstaining from intercourse on days when a woman is fertile. Tracking basal body temperature is used to predict ovulation. The temperature needs to be taken first thing each morning, prior to any other activity. The typical temperature prior to ovulation is 96 – 98°F and increases to 97 – 99°F during ovulation. The changes are recorded on a calendar and used to predict ovulation (i.e., fertility) in the following months.

Because a small (~1°) increase can be missed, temperature methods work best when done in conjunction with tracking changes in the cervical mucus (i.e., vaginal discharge), which has slight changes in color, texture and volume during ovulation.

BARRIER METHODS

Barrier methods of contraception include condoms, diaphragms and caps. These are non-pharmacologic options that form a physical barrier preventing passage of sperm to the egg.

DIAPHRAGMS AND CAPS

These options are soft latex or silicone barriers that cover the cervix and prevent sperm passage. They should be used with spermicide. Many diaphragms and caps require a prescription for fitting.

CONDOMS

Male condoms are a thin latex or plastic sheath worn on the penis. Female condoms are inserted into the vagina. Both are available OTC. Condoms help protect against many STIs [only if they are latex or polyurethane (plastic), not "natural" sheepskin].

- Use with nonoxynol-9 spermicide can cause irritation and increase risk of HIV transmission.
- Lubricant makes condoms less likely to break by reducing dry friction. Never recommend oil-based lubricant for use with a latex or non-latex synthetic condom; only recommend water or silicone-based lubricants. These products are discussed in the Osteoporosis, Menopause and Testosterone Use chapter.

OTHER CONTRACEPTIVE METHODS

Other OTC contraceptive methods include foams, films, creams, suppositories, sponges and jellies. These contain the spermicide nonoxynol-9. Do not use spermicide with anal sex. It is irritating and can increase the risk of STIs. The sponge is a round piece of plastic foam that is inserted prior to intercourse. It covers the cervix, continuously releases spermicide and is removed and discarded after use.

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A prescription-only option is *Phexxi*, a vaginal gel that maintains an acidic pH (range 3.5 – 4.5), which is inhospitable to sperm and reduces their mobility. It should not be used with vaginal rings or in those with a history of recurrent UTIs or urinary tract abnormalities.

HORMONAL CONTRACEPTIVES

Hormonal contraceptives work by inhibiting the production of FSH and LH, which prevents ovulation. They also alter cervical mucus, which inhibits the sperm from penetrating the egg. If implantation of the fertilized egg in the uterus has already taken place, none of these methods are effective, and the pregnancy will proceed normally.

Available treatments include progestin-only options (pill, injectable, implant and IUD) or estrogen/progestin combinations (pill, patch and vaginal ring). All contraceptives containing both estrogen and progestin are referred to as combined hormonal contraceptives (CHC). This includes combination oral contraceptives (COCs), as well as non-oral contraceptives (e.g., patch, ring). The patch and the ring have unique considerations (such as instructions for use) but contain hormones similar to pill formulations. Contraindications are the same for all CHCs.

Hormonal contraceptives provide health benefits, including a decrease in menstrual pain, menstrual irregularity, endometriosis pain, acne, and decreased risk of ectopic pregnancy, noncancerous breast cysts/lumps and endometrial/ovarian cancer.

The FDA requires that the Patient Package Insert (PPI) be dispensed with oral contraceptives – it will be in the product packaging. The PPI has important safety information, instructions on proper use and what to do if pills are missed.

ESTROGEN AND PROGESTIN COMBINATION ORAL CONTRACEPTIVES

Most COCs contain the estrogen ethinyl estradiol (EE) and a progestin [e.g., norethindrone, levonorgestrel (LNG), drospirenone]. There are different formulations of COCs.

- Monophasic COCs have the same dose of estrogen and progestin throughout the pill pack.
- Biphasic, triphasic and quadriphasic pill packs mimic the estrogen and progesterone levels during a menstrual cycle. The type of formulation (e.g., triphasic) refers to the number of times the amount of the hormones change (e.g., three times). The name of the pill can reflect the type (e.g., *Tri-Sprintec* is triphasic, with three different hormone "cycles").

Drospirenone is a unique progestin that is used in some COCs to reduce adverse effects commonly seen with oral contraceptives. It is a mild potassium-sparing diuretic due to its antimineralocorticoid activity, which decreases bloating, premenstrual syndrome (PMS) symptoms and weight gain; drospirenone-containing products are also associated with less acne, as they have anti-androgenic activity. Other progestins with low androgenic activity include norgestimate, desogestrel and dienogest.

TREATMENT OF OTHER INDICATIONS

COCs are used for other indications besides pregnancy prevention, including dysmenorrhea (menstrual cramps), PMS, acne (in females), anemia (by reducing blood loss), peri-menopausal symptoms (hot flashes, night sweats) and menstrual migraine prophylaxis. The use of COCs to regulate menses is first-line treatment for polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), a condition where infrequent, irregular or prolonged menstrual periods are common. Some women with PCOS will experience infertility, hirsutism, acne, weight gain and insulin resistance.

COCs are used as first-line treatment for endometriosis (which affects ~10% of females) in which endometrial tissue grows outside of the uterus. COCs reduce the associated symptoms of dysmenorrhea and heavy bleeding. Elagolix *(Orilissa)*, a gonadotropin-releasing hormone antagonist which suppresses LH and FSH, is FDA-approved for moderate to severe pain associated with endometriosis.

Natazia (a COC) and *Mirena* (a levonorgestrel-releasing IUD) are indicated for heavy menstrual bleeding (menorrhagia). *Oriahnn*, which contains estradiol, norethindrone and elagolix, is indicated for heavy menstrual bleeding associated with uterine fibroids, but is not a contraceptive (not intended to prevent pregnancy). The oral formulation of tranexamic acid (antifibrinolytic) is a nonhormonal treatment for menorrhagia.

PROGESTIN-ONLY PILLS

Progestin-only pills (POPs, mini-pills) contain no estrogen and have 28 days of active pills in each pack. POPs prevent pregnancy by suppressing ovulation, thickening the cervical mucus to inhibit sperm penetration and thinning the endometrium. POPs are primarily used in women who are lactating (breastfeeding), because estrogen decreases milk production. They can be started soon after delivery (3 – 6 weeks postpartum). It is not safe to use estrogen this soon after delivery because of an increased risk of thrombosis. POPs can also be useful for women with a contraindication or intolerance to estrogen. POPs require good adherence; the pill must be taken daily within three hours of the scheduled time. POPs are sometimes used for migraine prophylaxis and are safe in women who have migraines with aura; estrogen cannot be used with this type of migraine due to the risk of stroke.

NON-ORAL HORMONAL CONTRACEPTIVES

CONTRACEPTIVE PATCHES

Patches have the same side effects, contraindications and drug interactions as COCs, but patches cause a higher systemic estrogen exposure. This leads to an even higher risk of thromboembolism, making it critical to avoid their use in anyone with a high clotting risk (e.g., patients > 35 years old who smoke, patients with cerebrovascular disease or past blood clots, postpartum patients). They should also be avoided in women with a BMI ≥ 30 kg/m^2 [due to an increased thromboembolism risk *(Xulane, Zafemy)* or decreased efficacy *(Twirla)]. Xulane* and *Zafemy* may also be less effective in women who weigh > 198 pounds (90 kg).

VAGINAL CONTRACEPTIVE RINGS

The vaginal rings contain estrogen and progestin, so they have the same side effects, contraindications and drug interactions as COCs. These are small, flexible rings that are inserted into the vagina each month. The exact position of the ring in the vagina does not matter.

INJECTABLE CONTRACEPTION

Depot medroxyprogesterone acetate (DMPA), a progestin, is an injectable contraceptive. It suppresses ovulation, thickens cervical mucus and causes thinning of the endometrium. DMPA is administered by IM (150 mg) or SC (104 mg) injection every 3 months.

INTRAUTERINE DEVICES (IUDS)

IUDs are long-acting, reversible forms of contraception. Some IUDs contain levonorgestrel, a progestin, to enhance their effects; others are hormone free. IUDs are discussed in more detail later in the chapter, in the Long-Acting Reversible Contraceptives section.

CONTRACEPTION AND MENSTRUAL PERIODS

Most COC formulations involve 28 days (4 weeks) of pills, with 21 – 24 pills containing active hormone and the remaining pills containing no hormone (many use placebo pills, some contain iron or folate). During week 4 (the inactive pills), bleeding (menses) occurs for 3 – 7 days. Fewer inactive pills results in a shorter hormone-free interval and shorter bleeding time. Women who take COCs often have lighter bleeding because the endometrium remains relatively thin.

For the contraceptive patch or vaginal ring, bleeding occurs during the patch-free or ring-free interval (week 4). About half of medroxyprogesterone acetate users will be amenorrheic (no menses) after 1 year of use; likelihood increases with increased duration of use.

Extended-cycle COCs involve 84 days of active hormonal pills followed by 7 days of inactive or very low-dose estrogen pills. With this schedule, bleeding occurs every 3 months rather than every month. By taking continuous contraception, it is possible to suppress menses altogether. This involves taking hormonal pills only (no placebo pills). *Amethyst* is approved for this; other CHCs are used off-label in this way. With continuous use, it can be difficult to tell if a woman becomes pregnant. Spotting (breakthrough bleeding) occurs commonly with continuous contraception, which can lead to discontinuation. It is important to counsel patients that this typically resolves after 3 – 6 months. There are benefits to continuous use, such as less anemia and menstrual migraines.

SELECT CONTRACEPTIVE TYPES

This is not a comprehensive list. For exam purposes, consider patient-specific factors that help in selecting a medication and understand the counseling points that are unique to each formulation.

PRODUCT TYPE	DESCRIPTION
General tips for contraceptive names: ■ "Lo" indicates ≤ 35 mcg of estrogen; less estrogen causes less estrogenic side effects. Ex: *Loestrin* ■ "Fe" indicates an iron supplement is included. Ex: *Microgestin Fe 1/20* ■ "24" indicates a shorter placebo time: 24 active + 4 placebo = 28 day cycle. Ex: *Minastrin 24 Fe* ■ "Pro" indicates a progestin in the product. Ex: *Depo-Provera*	
Combination Oral Contraceptive (COC) Pills	
Monophasic Formulations	Provides the same dose of progestin and estrogen throughout the active pill days. Example: *Junel 1/20* contains 1 mg norethindrone and 20 mcg EE.
Junel Fe 1/20, Microgestin Fe 1/20, Sprintec 28, Loestrin 1/20, Yasmin 28, *Aviane, Nortrel 1/35, Ocella, Portia-28, Zovia 1/35*	21/7 pill pack contains 21 active hormonal pills, 7 inactive pills
Yaz, *Beyaz, Hailey 24 Fe, Nikki*	24/4 pill pack contains 24 active hormonal pills, 4 inactive pills
Lo Loestrin Fe	24/2/2 pill pack contains 24 active combined hormonal pills, 2 pills of just EE, and 2 inactive pills (with iron); very low dose estrogen used (EE 10 mcg)
Biphasic, Triphasic Formulations	"Phasic" in the name refers to the differing hormone dose being delivered in phases. The beginning of the name indicates the number of phases throughout the cycle (e.g., biphasic has two phases).
Tri-Sprintec, *Nortrel 7/7/7, Trivora-28, Velivet*	3 different weeks (7/7/7) or "tri" indicates a triphasic formulation

SELECT CONTRACEPTIVE TYPES continued

PRODUCT TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Quadriphasic Formulations *Natazia*	Hormone doses change over 26 days (four phases of estradiol valerate and dienogest) followed by 2 placebo pills to mimic menstrual cycle and minimize menstrual bleeding
Extended Cycle Formulations	Period occurs every 3 months
Jolessa, Introvale	84 days of EE + LNG followed by 7 days of placebo
Seasonique, Camrese, Camrese Lo, Amethia*, Daysee*	84 days of EE + LNG followed by 7 days of low dose EE
Continuous Formulations	No inactive pills (taken continuously); no period occurs
Amethyst, Dolishale	28 days of EE + LNG with no placebo pills
Drospirenone Containing Formulations	Mild potassium-sparing diuretic effect to reduce bloating and other effects
***Yasmin 28, Yaz**, Loryna, Ocella, Nextstellis, Nikki, Safyral, Syeda, Beyaz (Safyral & Beyaz* contain folate)	Contraindicated in renal or liver disease Monitor potassium, kidney function during use
Patches (contain estrogen and progestin)	
Transdermal patch	Higher estrogen exposure than pills
***Xulane**, Zafemy, Twirla*	Weeks 1-3: apply once weekly; week 4: off
Rings (contain estrogen and progestin)	
Vaginal ring	Lower estrogen exposure than pills
***NuvaRing**, EluRyng, Haloette, Annovera*	Insert monthly: leave in × 3 weeks, remove × 1 week
	Annovera: reusable vaginal ring; wash and store when it is removed, then reinsert; used for 1 year
Progestin-Only Pills (Mini-Pill/POP)	
***Errin, Camila, Nora-BE**, Incassia*	*Errin, Camila, Nora-BE* contain a fixed dose of norethindrone; take active tablet daily (no placebo days)
Slynd	*Slynd* is drospirenone-only
Opill	*Opill* is approved for use without a prescription
Injection (contains progestin only)	
Depo-Provera	Contains depot medroxyprogesterone (DMPA); injected every 3 months (150 mg IM or 104 mg SC)

**Brand discontinued but name still used in practice.*

ADVERSE EFFECTS OF HORMONAL CONTRACEPTIVES

ESTROGEN

Side effects of estrogen can include:

- Nausea
- Breast tenderness/fullness, bloating, weight gain and increased blood pressure (which can all be partially due to fluid retention)
- Melasma (dark skin patches, most often on the face)

Reducing the estrogen dose reduces the side effects, but a dose that is too low will cause breakthrough bleeding (spotting), especially during the early to mid-part of the cycle.

Serious adverse effects are rare, but can include thrombosis, including heart attack, stroke, deep vein thrombosis (DVT) or pulmonary embolism (PE); see Study Tip Gal. The risk for clots increases as the woman ages, if she smokes, if she has diabetes or hypertension, if she requires prolonged bed rest and if she is overweight. The higher the estrogen dose or exposure (e.g., with a transdermal patch), the higher the clotting risk. When evaluating thrombotic risk from use of CHCs, also consider risks of an unintended pregnancy if CHCs are not used; the thrombotic risk during pregnancy and postpartum is higher than that of CHCs.

SEVERE & RARE ADVERSE EFFECTS OF ESTROGEN

The dose of estrogen in contraceptive pills used to be much higher (with a higher clotting risk). Current formulations have lower estrogen doses and lower risk of clotting. Patients should be able to recognize symptoms of a DVT, PE and less common clots.

Remember: **ACHES**

Abdominal pain that is severe

- Can indicate a mesenteric or pelvic vein thrombosis.

Chest pain

- Sharp, crushing or heavy pain can indicate a heart attack. Shortness of breath with chest pain can indicate a PE (a blood clot in the lungs).

Headaches

- Sudden and severe with vomiting or weakness/numbness on one side of the body can indicate a stroke.

Eye problems

- Blurry vision, flashing lights or partial/complete vision loss can indicate a blood clot in the eye.

Swelling or sudden leg pain

- Can indicate a DVT (a blood clot in the leg).

PROGESTIN

Progestin can cause breast tenderness, headache, fatigue and depression.

Drospirenone has a slightly higher risk of clotting, and should not be used in women with clotting risk. It can also ↑ potassium levels; do not use with kidney, liver or adrenal gland disease (as these can ↑ potassium levels) or in those with ↑ potassium levels at baseline.

The injectable depot medroxyprogesterone acetate can cause a loss in bone mineral density. This can be especially important for teens and young women who are still accumulating bone mass. Minimally, women should be taking adequate calcium and vitamin D (see recommendations in the Osteoporosis, Menopause & Testosterone Use chapter).

BREAKTHROUGH BLEEDING

Breakthrough bleeding (i.e., spotting) usually resolves within 2 – 3 months. Continuous contraception has more breakthrough bleeding, especially during the first few months. Always check adherence; spotting can be due to a fast drop in estrogen from missing a pill. If spotting persists:

- And currently taking < 30 mcg estrogen daily: increase estrogen dose.
- And currently taking ≥ 30 mcg estrogen daily: try a different progestin.

RISKS OF HORMONAL CONTRACEPTIVES

BOXED WARNINGS

All CHC products (pills, ring, patch)

- Do not use in women > 35 years old who smoke due to risk of serious cardiovascular events

Estrogen + progestin transdermal patch

- Do not use in women with a BMI ≥ 30 kg/m^2 [due to increased risk of thromboembolism *(Xulane, Zafemy)* or decreased efficacy *(Twirla)]*

Depo-Provera

- Loss of bone mineral density with long-term use

DO NOT USE ESTROGEN WITH THESE CONDITIONS

History of DVT/PE, stroke, CAD, thrombosis of heart valves or acquired hypercoagulopathies

History of breast, ovarian, liver or endometrial cancer; liver disease; uncontrolled hypertension (e.g., > 160/100 mmHg); severe headaches or migraines with aura (especially if > 35 years of age); diabetes with vascular disease; unexplained uterine bleeding; others (vary by formulation)

CONSIDERATIONS FOR DRUG SELECTION

TYPE OF PATIENT	PRODUCT SELECTION CONSIDERATIONS
Acne or hirsutism	Use COC with a progestin that has lower androgenic activity [e.g., norgestimate *(Sprintec 28)]* or no androgenic activity [e.g., drospirenone *(Yaz, Yasmin)]*.
Breastfeeding	Choose progestin-only (e.g., POPs) or nonhormonal method. See Postpartum below.
Estrogen contraindication (including clotting risk)	Choose progestin-only (e.g., POPs) or nonhormonal method.
Migraine	If with aura, choose progestin-only or nonhormonal method; do not use estrogen. If no aura, choose any method.
Fluid retention/bloating	Choose a product containing drospirenone.
Heavy menstrual bleeding (menorrhagia)	*Natazia* (a COC) and *Mirena* (a levonorgestrel-releasing IUD) are indicated for this condition. COCs with only 4 placebo pills (rather than 7) or continuous/extended regimens will minimize bleeding time.
Hypertension	If BP uncontrolled, some estrogen formulations are contraindicated. Choose progestin-only or nonhormonal method.
Mood changes/disorder	Use monophasic COC – extended cycle or continuous with drospirenone is preferred.
Nausea	Take at night, with food; consider decreasing estrogen dose or switching to a progestin-only method, vaginal ring or nonhormonal method (ideally after a 3 month trial).
Overweight	Choose any method. Counsel patient about the possibility of reduced effectiveness with the contraceptive patch [and do not use the patch in obesity (BMI ≥ 30 kg/m^2)]. Do not use DMPA if trying to avoid weight gain.
Postpartum	Do not use CHCs for 3 weeks, or for 6 weeks if patient has additional risk factors for VTE. Can use progestin-only (e.g., POPs) or nonhormonal method during this time.
Premenstrual dysphoric disorder	Choose a product containing drospirenone (e.g. *Yaz*). An SSRI antidepressant may be needed; see Depression chapter.
Spotting/"breakthrough bleeding"	Common when initiating extended cycles or continuous regimens; usually resolves within 3-6 months. When starting conventional formulations, wait 3 cycles before switching. If early or mid-cycle spotting occurs, the estrogen dose may need to be increased. If later in the cycle, the progestin dose may need to be increased.
Wishes to avoid monthly cycle/menses	Use extended (91-day) or continuous formulations. Alternative: monophasic 28-day formulation & skip placebo pills.

DRUG INTERACTIONS WITH HORMONAL CONTRACEPTIVES

Efficacy of contraception may be ↓ by other drugs; the package insert of the new medication should always be checked for potential interactions. A back-up contraception method, such as condoms/spermicide, may be required; an IUD or injectable may also be considered. The injectable contraceptive bypasses first-pass metabolism and achieves higher serum concentrations, which ↓ drug interactions. If in doubt, it is safest to use a back-up method.

DRUG INTERACTIONS THAT DECREASE HORMONAL CONTRACEPTION EFFICACY

- Some antibiotics (e.g., rifampin, rifabutin, rifapentine; these are all strong CYP450 inducers) and antifungals (e.g., griseofulvin).
  - ☐ With rifampin, the induction can be prolonged; a back-up contraception method is needed for 6 weeks after rifampin has been discontinued.
- Antiseizure medications (carbamazepine, oxcarbazepine, phenytoin, primidone, topiramate, barbiturates and perampanel).
- St. John's wort.
- Smoking tobacco.
- Pharmacokinetic boosters (e.g., ritonavir, cobicistat), bosentan, mycophenolate.
- Colesevelam: separate by at least 4 hours.
- Tirzepatide (for COCs): use back-up contraception (non-oral or barrier) for 4 weeks after initiation and dose increases.

RISKS WITH HEPATITIS C TREATMENT

- Glecaprevir/pibrentasvir *(Mavyret)* use is not recommended with any formulation containing > 20 mcg of ethinyl estradiol due to the risk of liver toxicity.
- With all new hepatitis C drugs being dispensed to a patient using contraception, the package insert should be checked to avoid missing an interaction that could cause toxicity.

DROSPIRENONE DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Risk of ↑ potassium; caution must be used with other drugs that ↑ potassium, including aldosterone antagonists, potassium supplements, salt substitutes (KCl), ACE inhibitors, angiotensin receptor blockers, heparin, canagliflozin and calcineurin inhibitors (see hyperkalemia discussion in Renal Disease chapter).

STARTING BIRTH CONTROL PILLS

COMBINATION ORAL CONTRACEPTION

In general, it takes 7 days of hormonal pills to achieve contraceptive efficacy. Therefore, back-up (nonhormonal) contraception is required for 7 days, unless the COC is started within 5 days after the start of a period.

- Start today (also called "quick start"). Best practice recommendation. Maximizes time protected from unintended pregnancy.
- Sunday start. Starts the Sunday after onset of menstruation. This is commonly used if the patient prefers that menstruation occur during the week and is complete before the following weekend. It can lead to missed doses if the patient inadvertently runs out of refills over the weekend.
- First day start. Starts on the first day of menses. Because the COC is started within 5 days after the start of the period, no back-up method of birth control is needed; protection is immediate.

PROGESTIN-ONLY PILLS

- Start at any time. Use another method of birth control for the first 48 hours of progestin-pill use (unless within 5 days of the start of menses); protection begins after two days. All come in 28-day packs and all pills are active.
- Drospirenone POPs: if started > 1 day since the start of menses, use another method of birth control for 7 days.

LATE OR MISSED PILLS – INSTRUCTIONS FOR TYPICAL FORMULATIONS

Missed pills are a common cause of contraceptive failure, particularly if the hormone-free interval is extended. These are the standard instructions from the CDC regarding COCs; when answering questions in practice, check the package insert for the individual product. For the exam, you should know the general approach to missed doses:

- Start as soon as remembered.
- If more than one COC pill is missed, back-up contraception is required for 7 days.
- If missed pills/days are in the third week of the cycle, omit the hormone-free week and start the next package of pills right away without skipping any days; back-up contraception should be used for 7 days if next package can not be started.

MISSED DOSES FOR STANDARD CYCLE (28 DAYS)

<table>
<tr><th colspan="2"></th><th>WEEK 1</th><th>WEEK 2</th><th>WEEK 3</th><th>WEEK 4</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="6">COCs and drospirenone POPs*</td><td rowspan="3">1 late or missed pill
(< 48 hours since last dose)</td><td colspan="4">Take missed pill as soon as possible and take next dose on schedule (even if that makes 2 pills in 1 day).</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Back-up contraception required? No</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">EC: Not usually needed. Consider if missed doses earlier in the same cycle or in week 3 of the previous cycle.</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">2 missed pills
(≥ 48 hours since last dose)</td><td colspan="4">Take the most recent missed pill as soon as possible (discard any other missed pills). Take next dose on schedule (even if that makes 2 pills in 1 day).</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2"></td><td colspan="2">Omit hormone-free week: start next pack of pills right after finishing current pack.**</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Back-up contraception required? Yes, x 7 days</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">POPs</td><td>If > 3 hours past scheduled time</td><td colspan="3">Take a pill as soon as possible and take next dose on schedule.
Back-up contraception required? Yes, x 48 hours
EC: Consider if unprotected sex in last 5 days.</td></tr>
</table>

EC = emergency contraception (with the exception of ulipristal acetate).
**Drospirenone POPs should be treated as COCs in relation to missed pills, as their mechanism is more similar to COCs.*
***If unable to start a new pack right away, use back-up contraception until 7 days of hormonal pills have been taken.*

LONG-ACTING REVERSIBLE CONTRACEPTIVES

These devices are generally not dispensed from community pharmacies. They must be placed and removed by trained healthcare professionals. They are the most effective forms of reversible contraception, and are as effective as sterilization.

- Hormonal intrauterine devices *(Mirena, Skyla, Kyleena, Liletta)* contain the progestin levonorgestrel. These cause lighter menstrual bleeding and minor or no cramping. *Mirena* and *Liletta* are FDA-approved for heavy menstrual bleeding. After insertion, the IUD can be left in place for several years (i.e., 3 – 8 years) before it needs to be replaced; the specific timing is product-dependent. About half of women will become amenorrheic after 2 years of use.
- There are two FDA-approved copper IUDs, *Paragard* and *Miudella*. Some women prefer this nonhormonal method.
  - *Paragard* can be used for emergency contraception (EC) and/or regular birth control. It can be used for up to 10 years, but causes heavier menstrual bleeding and cramping.
  - *Miudella* contains a lower dose of copper and can be used for pregnancy prevention for up to 3 years.
- The implant *(Nexplanon)* is a plastic rod placed subdermally in the arm. It releases the progestin etonogestrel for three years.

CASE SCENARIO

KL is a 37-year-old female (G2 P2)* with antiphospholipid syndrome, diagnosed 2 years ago after a second DVT. She takes aspirin daily. Her last pregnancy was difficult. She requests contraception that is highly effective.

KL is 5 feet, 4 inches; 145 pounds; BP 111/77 mmHg

- Assess her medical history:
  - Estrogen is contraindicated with antiphospholipid syndrome or any clotting condition. She cannot use COCs, a vaginal ring or transdermal patch.
  - She could use POPs (the mini-pill), but the risk of unplanned pregnancy is high with missed or even late pills.
  - Another hormonal option is injectable medroxyprogesterone. Her bone health should be considered before use.
  - IUD placement or sterilization may be acceptable to KL.

**G2 P2 is an abbreviation for gravida and para. She has been pregnant twice and has had 2 deliveries after 24 weeks gestation.*

EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION

Emergency contraception (EC) is a form of contraception that prevents pregnancy after unprotected intercourse. Formulations include an IUD (copper IUD) and oral options (levonorgestrel and ulipristal acetate), which are also known as the "morning after pill." The sooner EC is used, the higher the efficacy. The use of higher doses of COCs is no longer a common practice as it is less effective than these options, leads to more nausea/vomiting and has more contraindications.

EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTIVE	EFFECTIVENESS	TIMING	CONSIDERATIONS
Copper IUD *(Paragard)*	Most effective (99.9%)	Within 5 days	Must be placed in the uterus by a healthcare professional Lasts for up to 10 years
Ulipristal acetate *(Ella)*	More effective than levonorgestrel Less effective if > 195 pounds or BMI > 30 kg/m^2 (consider IUD)	ASAP, within 5 days	Prescription required Must be taken after every episode of unprotected sex
Levonorgestrel *(Plan B One-Step* or a generic)	Less effective if > 165 pounds or BMI > 25 kg/m^2 (consider *Ella* or IUD)	ASAP, within 3 days*	Available OTC Must be taken after every episode of unprotected sex

**Remains moderately effective within 5 days; use may be considered*

EC can be an important resource after unprotected sex, such as from missed pills, a condom breaking, a diaphragm or cap moving out of place during intercourse or if a female has been sexually assaulted. If sexual assault has occurred, empiric STI treatment (chlamydia, gonorrhea, trichomoniasis), HIV post-exposure prophylaxis, HBV and HPV vaccines may be required. Pharmacists should have referrals for other providers available to assist patients.

LEVONORGESTREL

Plan B One-Step and generics are packaged as one 1.5 mg tablet of levonorgestrel. This EC formulation reduces the risk of pregnancy by up to 89% if started within 72 hours (3 days) after unprotected intercourse. The sooner it is taken, the higher the efficacy.

Plan B One-Step and generics *(Take Action, Aftera, My Way, React)* are available OTC with no age or other restrictions. These products can be sold in stores without a pharmacy. Per the FDA, these should be placed in the OTC aisles with the other family-planning products, such as condoms and spermicide. There is no reason to use a prescription with the formulations available OTC, except to use insurance coverage. If the EC is purchased OTC, there is no requirement for purchasers to sign a registry. They can purchase multiple doses and the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecologists (ACOG) recommends an additional dose for future use, if needed, since EC is more effective the sooner it is used.

- Mechanism of action: primarily works by preventing or delaying ovulation and thickens cervical mucus.
- Preferred regimen is 1.5 mg as a single dose *(Plan B One-Step).*
- The primary side effect is nausea, which occurs in 23% of women, and 6% have vomiting. If the woman is easily nauseated, an OTC antiemetic should be recommended to avoid losing the dose. If a patient vomits within two hours of taking the medication, she should consider repeating the dose.

ULIPRISTAL ACETATE

Ulipristal acetate *(Ella)* is available by prescription only, but is indicated for up to five days after unprotected intercourse. It is more effective than levonorgestrel if it has been 72 – 120 hours since unprotected intercourse or if the woman is overweight.

- Mechanism of action: prevents or delays ovulation and may alter the endometrium to impair implantation.
- Given as 30 mg in a single dose.
- Progestin-containing contraceptives should not be used in combination or within 5 days of ulipristal administration due to concern for decreased efficacy of ulipristal.
- Primary side effects are headache, nausea and abdominal pain. Some women have changes in their menstrual cycle, but the menstrual period typically restarts within one week of the expected date. Can only use once per cycle. Use a barrier method of contraception the rest of the cycle as ovulation may occur later than normal.

KEY COUNSELING POINTS

See the Drug Formulations and Patient Counseling chapter for counseling language/layman's terminology.

OTC CONTRACEPTIVE METHODS

DIAPHRAGM

- Wash hands thoroughly. Place one tablespoon of spermicide in the diaphragm and disperse inside and around the rim.
- Pinch the ends of the cup and insert the pinched end into the vagina.
- Leave in for six hours after intercourse. Diaphragms should not be in place greater than 24 hours.
- Reapply spermicide if intercourse is repeated or diaphragm is in place for more than two hours before sex, by inserting jelly with applicator.
- Remove and wash with mild soap and warm water, air dry.
- Can be used for 2 – 5 years, depending on material. Check frequently for holes between uses.

FOAMS, CREAMS, SUPPOSITORIES AND JELLIES

- Place deep into the vagina 10 – 15 minutes before intercourse where they melt (except for foam, which bubbles).
- Reinsert if more than 1 hour passes before intercourse.

SPONGE

- Wet the sponge and squeeze to activate the spermicide.
- Place deep into the vagina right before intercourse.
- Leave in place for at least six hours after intercourse, but it can be used for up to 24 hours. Remove and discard after use.

COMBINATION ORAL CONTRACEPTIVES

- Can increase risk of blood clots.
- Can cause nausea, weight gain and breast tenderness. Side effects often improve after three months of use. Taking the pill with food or at night helps to reduce nausea.
- Take the pill at the same time each day; pick a time of day that you will remember.
- Many drug interactions.

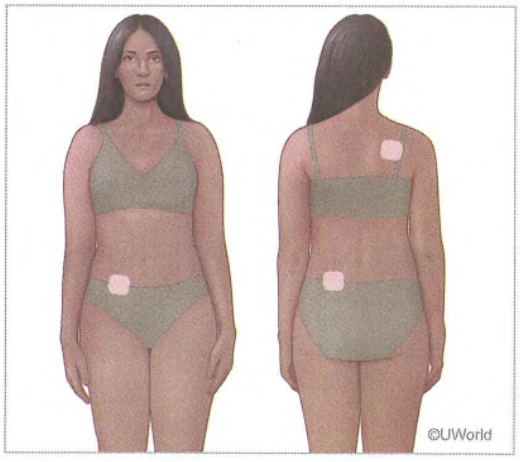
DROSPIRENONE FORMULATIONS

- Can increase potassium.

NON-ORAL FORMULATIONS

CONTRACEPTIVE PATCH

- Apply to clean, dry skin of buttocks, abdomen or upper back (or arm, for *Xulane* and *Zafemy)* once a week for 21 out of 28 days. Do not apply to breasts.



- Start on either day 1 (no back-up needed) or Sunday (back-up x 7 days if not day 1).
- If the patch becomes loose or falls off for > 24 hours during the three weeks of use, or if > 7 days have passed during the fourth week where no patch is required, there is a risk of pregnancy. A back-up method should be used for one week after starting a new patch.
- Patches will still contain some active hormones after use. Dispose of the patch by folding the sticky sides together, placing in a sturdy container (ideally with a child-resistant cap), and throwing it away in the trash. Do not flush it down the toilet.

NUVARING VAGINAL CONTRACEPTIVE RING

- The ring is inserted into the vagina once a month. It is kept in place for 3 weeks and taken out for 1 week before replacement with a new ring. The ring is effective for up to 4 weeks and, though not FDA-approved, can be kept in place to prevent a period. If the ring is kept in place for > 4 weeks: remove the ring, confirm no pregnancy, then insert a new ring and use back-up contraception until the new ring has been in place for 7 continuous days.
- The exact position of the ring in the vagina does not matter.
- Starting therapy and no hormonal contraceptive use in preceding cycle: insert the ring the first day of menstrual bleeding. If inserted on days 2 – 5 of cycle, back-up contraception should be used for the first 7 days in the first cycle.
- If the ring is expelled or removed:
  - ☐ Weeks 1 and 2: if out > 3 hours, rinse with cool to water and reinsert. Use back-up contraception for 7 days while the ring is in place, consider EC if intercourse within last 5 days.
  - ☐ Week 3: discard and insert a new ring. Use back-up contraception for 7 days while the ring is in place.
- A used ring will still contain some active hormones. To discard, place it back in the reclosable sachet it came in, then throw away in the trash. Do not flush it down the toilet.
- Store for up to 4 months at room temperature (refrigerate prior to dispensing).

INJECTABLE CONTRACEPTION (MEDROXYPROGESTERONE)

- Can decrease bone density. Take the recommended daily intake of calcium and vitamin D.
- You might experience a change in your normal menstrual cycle.

EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION

- Can cause nausea/vomiting. OTC antiemetics can help. If you vomit after taking the dose, contact your healthcare provider (may need another dose).
- If you do not get your period in 3 weeks (or it is more than a week late), a pregnancy test should be taken. Severe abdominal pain or irregular bleeding requires immediate medical attention.

- Visit your healthcare provider for a regular birth control method and information about preventing STIs. If you may have contracted an infection, you should get care right away.
- You may wish to get a package of EC for future use, if needed.
- Regular hormonal contraceptives (COCs, injection, ring, patch) should be started on the same or the following day as taking the EC (with the exception of ulipristal; hormonal contraception should be started after 5 days with this).
- You should only use one type of oral EC pill. Do not use two different types together.

PREGNANCY LOSS (MISCARRIAGE)

Pregnancy loss, also known as miscarriage, is defined as a nonviable pregnancy up to 20 weeks of gestation (typically < 13 weeks). Misoprostol (a prostaglandin analog which causes uterine contractions), possibly in combination with mifepristone (an antiprogestin), may be prescribed to aid in the process. If either of these medications are taken during pregnancy, they will result in pregnancy termination.

INFERTILITY

Infertility is defined as not being able to get pregnant (conceive) after one year or longer of unprotected sex. Infertility can be due to either the male or female. This section covers drugs used in females.

For females, treatment depends on the cause of infertility (e.g., absent ovulation). Clomiphene, a selective estrogen receptor modulator (SERM), and letrozole, an aromatase inhibitor, are oral tablets used to induce ovulation. Drugs that are SERMs act as estrogen agonists in some tissues and estrogen antagonists in other tissues. Clomiphene, like estrogen, causes LH and FSH to surge, which triggers ovulation. The surge in LH commonly causes hot flashes. SERMs have clotting risks. Letrozole impacts ovulation through estrogen negative feedback (estrogen production is suppressed, causing an FSH surge that leads to follicle development and ovulation).

Gonadotropins trigger ovulation by acting similar to the endogenous gonadotropins FSH or LH. Gonadotropins are used after a poor response to clomiphene or letrozole, or to spur egg release for procedures [e.g., intrauterine insemination, *in vitro* fertilization (IVF)].

Alternatively, exogenous hCG or gonadotropin releasing hormone agonists (GnRHA), such as leuprolide, can be used to trigger ovulation. The hCG hormone is important in pregnancy and in ovulation, where it binds to the LH receptor with a similar effect. Leuprolide and other GnRHAs are more commonly used in breast or prostate cancer treatment.

HOW INFERTILITY DRUGS CAUSE OVULATION

↑ LH/FSH → ovulation (release of eggs)

- Clomiphene acts as estrogen to ↑ LH/FSH
- Aromatase inhibitors suppress estrogen to ↑ FSH
- Gonadotropin drugs act as LH, FSH or hCG (similar to LH)

→ cause ovulation

GOOD: Infertility drugs trigger ovulation (egg release)

GOOD? They can trigger release of multiple eggs and ↑ risk of multiple births

Fertility medications, including gonadotropins and clomiphene, can cause multiple eggs to be released, which causes a risk of multiple births (see Study Tip Gal). Gonadotropins, similar to the majority of drugs that are hormones, cannot be taken orally. They are administered by SC or IM injection. This is one of the rare times a patient (or their partner) could be injecting IM, which is more painful than SC administration.

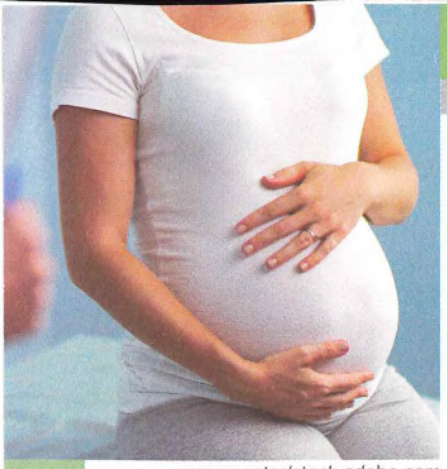
GONADOTROPIN DRUG NAMES

Generic names include chorionic gonadotropin-recombinant, follicle stimulating hormone-recombinant, human chorionic gonadotropin-recombinant and menotropin, which contains LH and FSH extracted from the urine of menopausal females.

Brand names can include parts of the words reproduce, menstrual, follicle, gonadotropin, pregnancy and ovary, including *Menopur, Follistim AQ, Gonal-f, Pregnyl, Novarel* and *Ovidrel.*

Select Guidelines/References

US Selected Practice Recommendations for Contraceptive Use, 2024. MMWR Recomm Rep 2024;73(No. RR-3):1-77. (accessed 2025 Feb 17).



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CHAPTER 48

DRUG USE IN PREGNANCY & LACTATION

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PREGNANCY

BACKGROUND

Pregnancy typically lasts 37 – 40 weeks and is divided into three trimesters. High levels of human chorionic gonadotropin (hCG) in the urine or blood confirms pregnancy. The first trimester (0 – 12 weeks) is when most organ development occurs, making the embryo most susceptible to birth defects caused by teratogens during this time (though they can also occur later). For a drug to be teratogenic, the drug has to cross the placenta into the fetal circulation. Teratogenic drugs should be discontinued prior to pregnancy, if possible.

Pharmacokinetic changes during pregnancy can require dose and regimen changes. For example, in women being treated for hypothyroidism, an increased dose of levothyroxine will be required in order to keep thyroid hormones within normal ranges. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) is an organization that publishes guidelines for safe and effective drug use in conditions impacting women, including pregnancy.

A patient's obstetric history can be described using gravida and para. Gravida (G) is the number of times the person has been pregnant. Para (P) is the number of times a patient has given birth. For example, a patient that is gravida 2, para 1 (or G2, P1 for short), has been pregnant twice and given birth once.

LIFESTYLE MANAGEMENT

Lifestyle modifications should always be considered first when treating pregnant patients. This includes encouragement to stop using recreational drugs, alcohol and tobacco, each of which is teratogenic. Behavioral intervention is a safe and sometimes effective strategy for prenatal smoking cessation. See the Tobacco Cessation chapter for more information.

VITAMIN AND MINERAL SUPPLEMENTATION

Folate deficiency can cause birth defects of the brain and spinal cord (neural tube defects). Folate (folic acid, vitamin B9) is found in many healthy foods, including fortified flour and cereals, dried beans, green leafy vegetables and orange juice. Adults should consume 400 mcg of dietary folate equivalents (DFE) per day. During pregnancy, folate requirements increase to 600 mcg DFE/day. Females of childbearing potential should increase their folic acid consumption through a combination of dietary supplements, fortified foods and their diet.

The baby's skeleton requires adequate calcium and vitamin D. If deficient in calcium, the mother's bone health will be sacrificed to provide for the baby. Pregnant women require 1,000 mg/day of calcium and 15 mcg/day (600 IU/day) of vitamin D. Iron is also vital to ensure adequate oxygenation for fetal development; 27 mg/day of iron is recommended for pregnancy.

Prenatal vitamins, available by prescription and OTC, typically contain around 800 – 1,000 mcg DFE, 15 – 25 mcg (600 – 1,000 IU) vitamin D, 100 – 200 mg calcium and 27 mg iron. Calcium is bulky and the prenatal vitamin would be too large if it contained more calcium. If the woman's dietary intake is insufficient, a separate calcium supplement may be needed.

CHANGES TO FDA PREGNANCY CATEGORIES

The old pregnancy categories were viewed as confusing and overly simplistic, leading physicians to unintentionally apply the provided information incorrectly. The labeling was updated to provide patients and clinicians with more detailed benefit/risk data on prescription drugs in order to make informed decisions. See the previous categories and new pregnancy package insert requirements in the following tables.

The deadline for the transition to the new pregnancy and lactation labeling format was June 2020. Drugs approved before 2001 are exempt from adopting the new labeling requirements but are required to remove the old categories.

Despite the updated labeling, prescribers will likely continue to use the previous terminology in practice. For this reason, it is important to remain familiar with the traditional categories. Drugs with known risk from the old categories should be considered to have the same risk unless noted otherwise. If a drug was Pregnancy Category X, it is contraindicated in pregnancy, which means it cannot be used in pregnancy for any reason.

PREVIOUS PREGNANCY CATEGORIES & INTERPRETATION

A	Controlled studies in animals & women show no risk in the first trimester. Risk of fetal harm is remote.
B	Animal studies have not demonstrated a fetal risk, but no well-controlled studies are available in pregnant women.
C	Animal studies have shown harm to the fetus, but there are no well-controlled studies in pregnant women. Use only if potential benefit outweighs the risk.
D	Positive evidence of risk to the human fetus is available, but the benefits may outweigh the risk with life-threatening or serious diseases.
X	Studies in animals or humans show fetal abnormalities. The risks involved clearly outweigh potential benefits; use in pregnancy is contraindicated.

UPDATED PREGNANCY SECTIONS IN PACKAGE INSERTS

8.1 Pregnancy	A pregnancy risk summary is required for all medications that includes the risk of adverse developmental outcomes based on human and animal data and the drug's pharmacology. Includes any dose adjustments, maternal/fetal adverse reactions and disease risks. Includes pregnancy exposure registry information. Pregnant women should be encouraged to participate in registries, which exist for select disease states and drugs. The registries collect health information from women who take prescription drugs and vaccines when pregnant and breastfeeding. Information is also collected on the newborn baby.
8.2 Lactation	Includes whether the drug/metabolites are present in human milk, the effects on the breastfed infant, and the effects on milk production. If applicable, ways to minimize exposure and monitor for adverse reactions are included.
8.3 Females & Males of Reproductive Potential	Includes any effects on fertility and requirements for pregnancy testing and contraception.

COMMON TERATOGENS

Teratogenic drugs should be discontinued prior to pregnancy if possible, but many pregnancies are not planned. Once pregnancy is confirmed, medical providers should switch patients from teratogenic drugs to safer options.

Throughout the UWorld RxPrep course book, medications with boxed warnings and contraindications associated with teratogenicity are noted in the drug tables. A summary of many commonly used drugs with teratogenic risk is shown in the Key Drugs Guy on the next page and should be known for the exam. Some are well-documented teratogens, and use in a pregnant patient is rarely, if ever, appropriate. Drugs with significant teratogenic risk may have REMS requirements due to potential harm to the fetus (see the Drug Allergies & Adverse Drug Reactions chapter).

Teratogens are hazardous drugs according to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) and require special handling to avoid risk to healthcare workers; see the Compounding with Hazardous Drugs chapter.

Use of some medications in pregnant patients is debatable, and many medications have limited data regarding safety in pregnancy. With any medication, the drug's potential harm must be weighed against the risk of the condition not being adequately treated. For example, the use of lamotrigine in pregnancy carries a risk of congenital malformations, but seizures cause damage to both the mother and child. In some cases, a switch to a safer drug is possible, while in other situations the risk of switching is high. A pregnant woman may need to remain on lamotrigine if she has a history of poor seizure control before being placed on the drug.

Always check reputable, up-to-date resources when prescribing/dispensing to pregnant women. *Briggs' Drugs in Pregnancy and Lactation* and other resources are reviewed in the Drug References chapter.

TERATOGENS: DANGER IN PREGNANCY

KEY DRUGS

Acne
Isotretinoin, topical retinoids

Antibiotics*
Quinolones, tetracyclines

Anticoagulants
Warfarin**

Dyslipidemia, Heart Failure and Hypertension
Statins, RAAS inhibitors (ACE inhibitors, ARBs, aliskiren, sacubitril/valsartan)

Hormones
Most, including estradiol, progesterone (including megestrol), raloxifene, *Duavee,* testosterone, contraceptives

Migraine
Dihydroergotamine, ergotamine

Other important teratogens

- Hydroxyurea
- Lithium
- Methotrexate
- Misoprostol
- NSAIDs
- Paroxetine
- Ribavirin
- Thalidomide
- Topiramate
- Weight loss drugs
- Valproate

Others:

- Amiodarone
- Dronedarone
- Aminoglycosides
- Atenolol
- Benzodiazepines
- Dutasteride
- Finasteride
- Fluconazole
- Voriconazole
- Griseofulvin
- ERAs (e.g., bosentan)
- Leflunomide
- Lenalidomide
- Lomitapide
- Methimazole, propylthiouracil
- Mycophenolate
- Radioactive iodine
- Carbamazepine
- Phenobarbital
- Phenytoin

**See Infectious Diseases I chapter for information on metronidazole, nitrofurantoin, sulfamethoxazole/trimethoprim and telavancin.*
***See Anticoagulation chapter for details.*

DRUG TREATMENT

If possible, use lifestyle measures to treat medical conditions in pregnant women. When this is impossible or ineffective, choose drugs carefully.

IMMUNIZATIONS

Several immunizations are routinely recommended for pregnant patients. The inactivated influenza vaccine (not live) is recommended during any trimester at the beginning of flu season, and all pregnant individuals are recommended to be vaccinated against COVID-19 during any trimester. A single dose of Tdap should be administered during each pregnancy, ideally between weeks 27 and 36. The RSV vaccine *(Abrysvo)* is also recommended if the patient will be between weeks 32 and 36 during September to January. All live vaccines are contraindicated in pregnant patients. See the Immunizations chapter for more information on vaccination in pregnancy.

PREECLAMPSIA

Preeclampsia is a complication of pregnancy that presents with elevated blood pressure and evidence of organ damage (e.g., proteinuria), most often affecting the kidneys or liver. It typically occurs after 20 weeks gestation and can occur in women with previously normal blood pressure. If not treated, preeclampsia can progress to eclampsia, which can lead to seizures and death. The only cure for preeclampsia is delivery of the baby.

To prevent preeclampsia, ACOG and American Diabetes Association (ADA) guidelines recommend adding daily low-dose aspirin at the end of the first trimester for pregnant women at risk for preeclampsia (e.g., diabetes, renal disease, history of preeclampsia, chronic hypertension). See the Hypertension chapter for more information.

SELECT CONDITIONS AND PREFERRED MANAGEMENT DURING PREGNANCY

CONDITION	PREFERRED MANAGEMENT	NOTES
Morning Sickness, Nausea, Vomiting	Lifestyle first: avoid an empty stomach, eat smaller, more frequent meals, drink plenty of water, avoid spicy or odorous foods and avoid environmental triggers. If lifestyle measures fail, ACOG recommends pyridoxine (vitamin B6) +/- doxylamine first line. Rx: doxylamine/pyridoxine *(Bonjesta, Diclegis)*.	Ginger is rated "possibly effective" for treating morning sickness. Hyperemesis gravidarum is severe N/V, causing weight loss, dehydration and electrolyte imbalance. It will be treated under the care of an obstetrician and may require hospitalization.
GERD/Heartburn	Lifestyle first: eat smaller, more frequent meals, avoid foods that worsen GERD. If symptoms occur while sleeping, recommend elevating the head of the bed and not eating 3 hours prior to sleep. If lifestyle measures fail, recommend antacids. Calcium antacids, such as calcium carbonate *(Tums)*, are a good choice to also supplement calcium intake.	If heartburn symptoms are not relieved by antacids, H2 receptor antagonists or PPIs can be considered for add-on therapy.
Flatulence	Simethicone *(Gas-X, Mylicon)*.	
Constipation	Lifestyle first: ↑ fluid intake, ↑ dietary fiber intake and ↑ physical activity. If lifestyle measures fail, fiber (psyllium, calcium polycarbophil, methylcellulose), with adequate amounts of fluids, is preferred. Docusate and polyethylene glycol can also be used to prevent and treat constipation.	Many prenatal vitamins contain iron, which can worsen constipation.
Cough, Cold, Allergies	First line: cromolyn. Second line: First-generation antihistamines [e.g.,chlorpheniramine (drug of choice), diphenhydramine] are recommended due to a history of safety but cause sedation. The non-sedating second-generation agents (loratadine and cetirizine) are now often recommended by obstetricians. If nasal steroids are needed for chronic allergy symptoms, all intranasal steroids are considered to be safe. Budesonide is preferred.	Oral decongestants (e.g., pseudoephedrine) should not be recommended during the first trimester. The cough-suppressant dextromethorphan and the mucolytic guaifenesin have limited safety data in pregnancy/lactation, but are sometimes used. Avoid liquid formulations that contain alcohol.
Pain	Non-drug options such as hot/cold packs, light massage or physical therapy can help limit or avoid the use of analgesics. ACOG recommends acetaminophen first-line for mild pain during pregnancy because it has a better safety profile than NSAIDs and opioids.	Avoid NSAIDs, including aspirin (except for low-dose aspirin for preeclampsia prevention), especially at 20 weeks gestation or later. During pregnancy, NSAID use can cause premature closure of the fetal ductus arteriosus and kidney problems in the fetus (leading to low amniotic fluid). Opioids should only be used during pregnancy if there are no alternatives.

CONDITION	PREFERRED MANAGEMENT	NOTES
Asthma	Maintenance therapy: budesonide is preferred but all inhaled corticosteroids (ICS) are considered safe for use in pregnancy. Long-acting beta-agonists can be continued with ICS if needed. Rescue therapy: ICS-formoterol or albuterol (short-acting beta agonist).	Budesonide *Respules* are used in a nebulizer.
Iron Deficiency Anemia	Supplemental iron, prenatal vitamins with iron.	Iron worsens constipation.
Hypertension*	Labetalol, nifedipine extended-release, methyldopa.	ACE inhibitors, ARBs, aliskiren and *Entresto* are contraindicated in pregnancy. Low-dose aspirin is recommended for preeclampsia prevention in patients with chronic hypertension.
Diabetes*	Insulin is preferred if not controlled with lifestyle. Metformin and glyburide are sometimes used.	Low-dose aspirin is recommended for preeclampsia prevention in both type 1 and 2 diabetes. If diabetes develops during pregnancy it is called gestational diabetes.
Infection*	Generally considered safe to use: penicillins (including amoxicillin and ampicillin), cephalosporins, erythromycin and azithromycin. **VAGINAL FUNGAL INFECTIONS** Topical antifungals (creams, suppositories) × 7 days. **URINARY TRACT INFECTIONS** Cephalexin 500 mg PO Q6H × 7 days. Amoxicillin 500 mg PO Q8H × 7 days. Alternatives: nitrofurantoin, SMX/TMP and fosfomycin. Must treat bacteriuria, even if asymptomatic. Untreated bacteriuria can lead to pyelonephritis, premature birth and perinatal mortality. **TOXOPLASMOSIS** Many people who are infected with toxoplasmosis are asymptomatic. If a woman contracts toxoplasmosis during pregnancy, it can cause miscarriage, stillbirth or damage to the baby's brain and eyes. Women can be tested prior to pregnancy with an IgM and IgG test. Pregnant women should avoid dirty food and water (uncommon in the U.S.), unpasteurized dairy products and cat feces (including contact with cat litter boxes), which can contain the parasite.	Do not use: quinolones (due to cartilage damage) and tetracyclines (due to teeth discoloration). **VAGINAL FUNGAL INFECTIONS** Avoid fluconazole. **URINARY TRACT INFECTION** Nitrofurantoin and SMX/TMP should be considered last line during the 1st trimester, and should not be used in the last 2 weeks of pregnancy.

**Managing hypertension, diabetes, HIV and certain infections during pregnancy are discussed in detail in the respective chapters.*

CONDITION	PREFERRED MANAGEMENT	NOTES
Conditions requiring anticoagulation	**VENOUS THROMBOEMBOLISM (VTE)** Treatment: low molecular weight heparin (LMWH) is preferred over unfractionated heparin (UFH) due to ease of administration. Prophylaxis: pneumatic compression devices ± LMWH (preferred over UFH). **MECHANICAL VALVE** Women who require chronic warfarin therapy for mechanical heart valves or inherited thrombophilias are generally converted to LMWH during pregnancy. They may be switched back to warfarin after the 13th week of pregnancy, then back to LMWH close to delivery.	The risk of developing a VTE is increased during pregnancy and for the first six weeks postpartum. Warfarin is teratogenic. The oral factor Xa inhibitors and direct thrombin inhibitors have not been adequately studied in pregnancy and are not recommended. Monitor peak anti-Xa levels, drawn 4 hours post-dose (LMWH), or aPTT (UFH).
Hypothyroidism	Levothyroxine (will require a 30-50% dose increase during pregnancy).	Hypothyroidism must be treated during pregnancy; if left untreated, severe consequences could include miscarriage or stillbirth, preeclampsia, low birth weight, cognitive impairment and growth retardation.
Hyperthyroidism	Mild cases will not require treatment. It is preferable to normalize the mother's thyroid function prior to pregnancy. Contraception should be used until the condition is controlled. If drugs are necessary (i.e., Graves' disease), both methimazole and propylthiouracil (PTU) carry potential fetal risks. Methimazole is generally preferred over PTU, except for early in pregnancy. In the 1st trimester, patients should receive PTU if therapy is needed.	Both PTU and methimazole have a high risk for liver damage. Uncontrolled maternal hyperthyroidism can cause premature delivery and low birth weight. Radioactive iodine is teratogenic and not used in pregnancy.

LACTATION

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that babies be exclusively breastfed for the first six months of life, as long as it is mutually desired by the mother and baby and if safety risks are not present. After this, it is recommended to continue breastfeeding with complementary foods for at least two years if feasible. Mothers who are breastfeeding should increase their diet by 330 – 400 kcal/day and continue prenatal vitamins and omega-3 supplements. Babies receiving breast milk partially or exclusively should receive 10 mcg (400 IU) of vitamin D supplementation daily.

Human milk contains very little iron (unlike formula), but most newborns have adequate iron stores in the body for at least the first 4 months of life. Iron supplementation (1 mg/kg daily) may be needed after 4 months of age for breastfed babies until the infant can obtain adequate iron from eating iron-rich solid foods, which usually occurs at 6 months old. See the Dietary Supplements, Natural & Complementary Medicine chapter for more information.

Excretion into breast milk is higher with drugs that are non-ionized, have a small molecular weight, a low volume of distribution and high lipid solubility. The majority of medications have low excretion into breast milk and can be taken safely while breastfeeding. Additionally, breastfeeding can continue when the mother has a cold, influenza and with the majority of other infections. *LactMed* (https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK501922/) or *Briggs' Drugs in Pregnancy and Lactation* can be used to check for drug safety during breastfeeding. Refer to the Drug References chapter for more information.

TREATING PAIN

Postpartum pain can often be adequately treated with acetaminophen or ibuprofen, which are safe to use while breastfeeding. Codeine and tramadol should not be used by breastfeeding mothers due to risk of excessive sleepiness, breathing difficulty and/or death in the infant. Breastfed infants have died, especially in mothers taking codeine who were CYP450 2D6 ultra-rapid metabolizers. Because of the importance, this is discussed further in the Drug Interactions, Pharmacogenomics and Pain chapters. Even small doses of opioids taken by the mother can cause serious side effects for the infant.

KNOWN OR SUSPECTED HIV

Breastfeeding is not recommended for women with documented HIV infection in the United States, especially for those who are not on antiretroviral therapy (ART) or do not have sustained viral suppression while on ART. Any woman with suspected HIV infection should stop breastfeeding until HIV is ruled out with proper testing.

SPECIFIC MEDICATIONS

Drugs that should be avoided completely during lactation include chemotherapy, illicit drugs and radioactive compounds used for treatment and diagnostic studies (e.g., iodine).

Some medications should be avoided during lactation, if possible. Use of these drugs while breastfeeding is not without significant risk and a decision must be made based on a discussion between patient and provider. In some cases, patients may be able to pump and dispose of the breastmilk when drug concentrations are at the highest. Examples of these medications include amphetamines, amiodarone, ergotamines, lithium, metronidazole, phenobarbital and statins. Most often, safer alternatives are available.

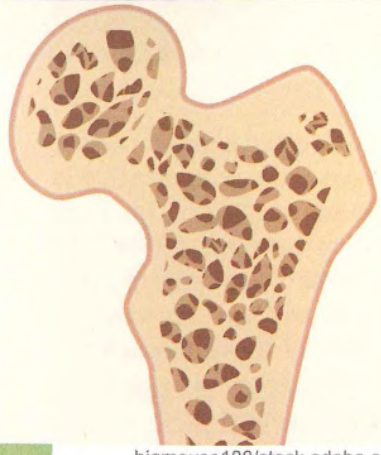
Other medications should be avoided due to a risk of decreasing milk production. These include antihistamines (e.g., diphenhydramine, cetirizine), decongestants (e.g., pseudoephedrine) and anticholinergics.

For all drugs taken during lactation, the infant should be monitored for adverse effects caused by maternal medication use.

Select Guidelines/References

American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) Practice Guidelines, available at www.acog.org (accessed 2024 Dec 16).

CDC Recommendations for Breastfeeding, available at www.cdc.gov (accessed 2024 Dec 16).



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CHAPTER 49

OSTEOPOROSIS, MENOPAUSE & TESTOSTERONE USE

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= Study Tip Gal

OSTEOPOROSIS

BACKGROUND

Osteoporosis ("porous bones") is a condition that causes bones to become weak and fragile. It is estimated that more than one-quarter of all adults in the U.S., and over half of those > 50 years of age, have osteoporosis, low bone density or low bone mass. Osteoporosis can occur in both males and females of all races. It is most common in postmenopausal females. About one in two females and one in five males will have an osteoporosis-related fracture during their lifetime. Falls are the most common cause of fractures, but with extremely porous bones, they can be caused by coughing or rolling over in bed.

The most common locations for fractures are the vertebrae (spine), proximal femur (hip) and distal forearm (wrist). Vertebral fractures can occur without a fall and can initially be painless (the only clue may be a gradual loss of height). Hip fractures are the most devastating type of fractures, with higher costs, disability and mortality than all other fractures combined. Hip fractures are more common after the age of 75 years. Wrist fractures, and other types of fractures, appear in younger people and serve as an early indicator of poor bone health.

RISK FACTORS

Osteoporosis can occur as a result of normal age-related bone loss. Bone accumulates until approximately age 30. After that, males lose bone at a rate of 0.2 – 0.5% per year, and females lose bone at a similar rate, except in the 10 years after menopause when bone loss is accelerated (1 – 5% per year). Patient-specific characteristics that can contribute to osteoporosis risk include lifestyle habits, diseases and medications (see the Study Tip Gal below).

SELECT FACTORS AND CONDITIONS WITH OSTEOPOROSIS RISK

Patient Characteristics
Advanced age
Ethnicity (Caucasian and Asian are at ↑ risk)
Family history
Sex (females > males)
Low body weight

Medical Diseases/Conditions
Diabetes
Eating disorders (e.g., anorexia nervosa)
Gastrointestinal diseases (e.g., IBD, celiac disease, gastric bypass, malabsorption syndromes)
Hyperthyroidism
Hypogonadism in males
Menopause
Rheumatoid arthritis, autoimmune diseases
Others (e.g., epilepsy, HIV/AIDS, Parkinson disease)

Lifestyle Factors
Smoking
Excessive alcohol intake (≥ 3 drinks per day)
Low calcium intake
Low vitamin D intake
Physical inactivity

Medications
Antiseizure medications (e.g., carbamazepine, phenytoin)
Aromatase inhibitors
Depo-medroxyprogesterone
GnRH (gonadotropin-releasing hormone) agonists
Lithium
PPIs (↑ gastric pH decreases Ca absorption)
Steroids* (≥ 5 mg daily of prednisone or prednisone equivalent for ≥ 3 months)
Thyroid hormones (in excess)
Others (e.g., loop diuretics, SSRIs, TZDs, tenofovir)

**Long-term use of steroids is the major drug-contributing factor to poor bone health.*

DIAGNOSIS

BONE MINERAL DENSITY

Bone is not "dead tissue"; it is living and undergoes constant remodeling. Osteoblasts are the cells involved in bone formation. Osteoclasts are the cells involved in bone resorption; they break down tissue in the bone. Bone health is evaluated by measuring bone mineral density (BMD). The gold standard to measure BMD and diagnose osteoporosis is a dual-energy X-ray absorptiometry (DEXA or DXA) scan. This measures BMD of the spine and hip and calculates a T-score or a Z-score. See the Study Tip Gal for interpreting T-scores for the diagnosis of osteoporosis and osteopenia.

All females ≥ 65 years and males ≥ 70 years should have BMD measured. BMD can be checked earlier if there is a history of a fragility fracture (e.g., a fall from standing height or lower that results in a fracture) after age 50, risk for disease or drug-induced bone loss, a parental history of hip fracture or other clinical risk factors (e.g., smoking, alcoholism, low body weight).

If a DXA scan is unavailable, an ultrasound may be performed. Ultrasounds are less expensive, portable and do not emit radiation, but they only provide bone density in one location, such as the heel. If low, the patient should be encouraged to get a DXA scan. Since vertebral fractures are so common in older adults and usually lack symptoms, vertebral imaging may be performed if height loss is observed or if BMD testing indicates osteopenia.

FRACTURE RISK ASSESSMENT TOOL (FRAX)

The FRAX tool developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates the risk of osteoporotic fracture in the next 10 years (available at www.bonesource.org/frax-tool or https://frax.shef.ac.uk/FRAX/). It has been well-validated, and the U.S. tool has adapted versions available for White, Black, Asian and Hispanic females. Clinical risk factors included in the tool are age, sex, weight, height, previous fracture, parental hip fracture, femoral neck BMD, smoking status, steroid use, alcohol intake, disorders strongly associated with osteoporosis (e.g., type 1 diabetes, chronic liver disease, premature menopause) and diagnosis of rheumatoid arthritis. The tool is for postmenopausal females and males > age 50 years.

DIAGNOSIS OF OSTEOPOROSIS

WHAT IS A T-SCORE?

It compares the patient's measured BMD to the average peak BMD of a healthy, young, white adult of the same sex.*

A DEXA (or DXA) measures BMD so a T-score can be determined.

T-scores are negative: a score at or above -1 correlates with stronger (denser) bones, which are less likely to fracture.**

WHO SHOULD HAVE BMD MEASURED?

Females ≥ 65 years and males ≥ 70 years.

Younger patients at high risk for fracture (see text).

INTERPRETING T-SCORE RESULTS

Normal: ≥ -1

Osteopenia (low bone mass): -1 to -2.4***

Osteoporosis: ≤ -2.5

A Z-score is calculated the same way, but compares the patient's measured BMD to the mean BMD of an age, sex and ethnicity-matched population.

***Scores less than -1 reflect the standard deviation from the comparator group (e.g., a T-score of < -2.5 means the patient's BMD is < 2.5 standard deviations below the average BMD for healthy, young, white adults).*

****Repeat DXA scanning (every 2 years) is recommended for patients with T-scores < -2.0 but > -2.5 or with ongoing risk of bone loss (including diabetes).*

PREVENTION

FALL PREVENTION MEASURES

If bone density is low, care must be taken to avoid falls. Factors that put a patient at increased fall risk include a history of recent falls, medications that cause sedation or orthostasis (e.g., antihypertensives, sedatives, hypnotics, narcotic analgesics, psychotropics), neurologic disorders, conditions causing physical instability or poor coordination (e.g., Parkinson disease, dementia, prior stroke, peripheral neuropathy), impaired vision or hearing, poor health/frailty and urinary or fecal urgency. A home safety assessment evaluates that lighting is appropriate, floors are safe (rugs/clutter/cords are removed), storage is at reasonable heights, bathrooms have safety bars and non-skid floors, handrails are present on all stairs and the stairs are well-lit with non-skid treads or carpet.

Preventing falls requires measures to improve strength, balance and vision. Adequate corrective lenses, safe shoes and appropriate clothing (that will not cause falls) are required. If a disability is present, canes or walkers should be strongly recommended.

LIFESTYLE MEASURES

Patients with low bone density should perform regular weight-bearing exercise (e.g., walking, jogging, Tai-Chi) and muscle-strengthening exercise (e.g., weight training, yoga). They should be encouraged to stop smoking, avoid secondhand smoke, reduce alcohol intake and adopt fall prevention strategies.

CALCIUM AND VITAMIN D INTAKE

Adequate calcium intake is required throughout life. It is critically important in children (who can build bone stores), in pregnancy (when the fetus can deplete the mother's stores) and during the years around menopause when bone loss is rapid. Dietary intake of calcium is preferred, with supplements used if needed. Intake in excess of the recommended allowances may contribute to kidney stones, cardiovascular disease and stroke, though the evidence remains controversial.

Vitamin D is required for calcium absorption, and low levels contribute to various health conditions. Vitamin D deficiency in children causes rickets, and in adults, it causes osteomalacia (softening of the bones). The Bone Health and Osteoporosis Foundation recommends 20 – 25 mcg [800 – 1,000 international units (IU)] of vitamin D daily for adults age ≥ 50 years. Other organizations recommend 15 mcg (600 IU) daily for people age ≥ 71 years. Many endocrinologists suggest 25 – 50 mcg (1,000 – 2,000 IU) daily. The National Academy of Medicine considers a safe upper limit to be 100 mcg (4,000 IU) daily for adolescents and adults. Higher doses are needed if a vitamin D deficiency is present (see the Study Tip Gal).

CALCIUM AND VITAMIN D SUPPLEMENTATION

Calcium obtained through the diet is often not enough; most females need an additional 600 – 900 mg daily (2 to 3 servings of dairy) to reach recommended levels.

Calcium absorption is saturable; doses > 500 – 600 mg of elemental calcium should be divided. Calcium products are available in many forms (e.g., capsules, tablets, chewables, liquids, granules, powder).

- Calcium carbonate has more elemental calcium per unit compared to calcium citrate, but requires an acidic environment for absorption
- Calcium citrate has better absorption with increased gastric pH (e.g., older adults, PPI use)

Vitamin D deficiency can be treated with high doses of vitamin D2 (ergocalciferol) or vitamin D3 (cholecalciferol) for 8 to 12 weeks, followed by maintenance therapy. Maintenance therapy is 25 – 50 mcg (1,000 – 2,000 IU) daily, or dosed to maintain target levels. See the Renal Disease chapter for information on vitamin D analogs (e.g., calcitriol).

Sunlight is another source of vitamin D3 but is not ideal due to the risk of skin cancer. Dietary intake and supplements are the preferred sources of vitamin D.

CALCIUM AND VITAMIN D

CALCIUM

- Recommended daily intake for most adults is 1,000-1,200 mg elemental calcium
  - ☐ Do not exceed 500-600 mg of elemental calcium per dose
- Calcium carbonate (e.g., Tums)
  - ☐ 40% elemental calcium
  - ☐ Absorption: acid-dependent
  - ☐ Must take with meals
- Calcium citrate (e.g., Cal-Citrate)
  - ☐ 21% elemental calcium
  - ☐ Absorption: not acid-dependent
  - ☐ Can take with or without food

Avoid low bone density later in life by building strong bones in children

VITAMIN D

- Required for calcium absorption
- Deficiency: serum vitamin D [25(OH)D] < 30 ng/mL
- Treat deficiency with cholecalciferol (vitamin D3) or ergocalciferol (vitamin D2)
  - ☐ Cholecalciferol: 125-175 mcg (5,000-7,000 IU) daily
  - ☐ Ergocalciferol: 1,250 mcg (50,000 IU) weekly

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DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Calcium Supplements		
Calcium Carbonate ***(Tums,*** *Oysco,* others) + cholecalciferol ***(Caltrate)*** 40% elemental calcium	Calcium 500 mg PO TID with meals (can vary with formulation used) Total daily dose of elemental Ca should be < 2,000 mg (diet & supplements)	**SIDE EFFECTS** Constipation, hypercalcemia, nausea **MONITORING** Ca, PO4, PTH **NOTES** ↑ risk of hypercalcemia with concomitant vitamin D (due to ↑ Ca absorption) Calcium carbonate: take with food; do not use with PPIs Calcium citrate: take with or without food
Calcium Citrate ***(Cal-Citrate,*** others) + cholecalciferol ***(Citracal)*** 21% elemental calcium	1 g calcium carbonate = 400 mg elemental calcium 1 g calcium citrate = 210 mg elemental calcium	

DRUG TREATMENT

There are a number of FDA-approved options for the treatment and prevention of osteoporosis. Medications approved for prevention include bisphosphonates (except IV ibandronate) and the estrogen-based therapies, raloxifene and *Duavee*. Bisphosphonates, denosumab, parathyroid hormone analogs (e.g., teriparatide, abaloparatide) and calcitonin are indicated for treatment. These medications have primarily been studied in postmenopausal females with osteoporosis, and there is limited data in males or in those with glucocorticoid-induced osteoporosis. Regardless of drug selection, treatment must include adequate calcium and vitamin D intake, with levels evaluated before initiating therapy. See the Study Tip Gal on next page for important facts about each drug/drug class.

CRITERIA FOR INITIATING TREATMENT*

Osteoporosis	■ T-score ≤ -2.5* in the spine, femoral neck, total hip or 1/3 radius, OR ■ Presence of a fragility fracture, regardless of BMD
Osteopenia, if high risk	■ Low bone density (T-score between -1 and -2.5) AND ■ FRAX score indicates a 10-year probability of a major osteoporosis-related fracture ≥ 20% or a 10-year hip fracture probability ≥ 3%

**For patients with diabetes, consider treatment for a T-score ≤ -2.0.*

DRUG SUMMARY FOR OSTEOPOROSIS TREATMENT AND PREVENTION

BISPHOSPHONATES

- First-line for treatment or prevention
- PO: must stay upright for 30 minutes (60 minutes for ibandronate) and drink 6-8 oz of plain water
- Can cause esophagitis, ↓ calcium, GI effects
- Rare (but serious) side effects:
  - Atypical femur fractures
  - Osteonecrosis of the jaw (ONJ): jaw bone gets exposed and cannot heal due to ↓ blood supply
- Formulations:
  - PO: given daily, weekly or monthly
  - IV: given quarterly or yearly; used if GI side effects or adherence issues with PO formulation
- Treatment duration: 3-5 years in patients with a low risk of fracture (due to risk of femur fracture, ONJ)

DENOSUMAB

- Alternative to bisphosphonates
- SC administration every 6 months
- Can cause hypocalcemia

TERIPARATIDE, ABALOPARATIDE

- Recommended for very high-risk patients only (e.g., history of severe vertebral fractures)
- SC administration daily
- Can cause hypercalcemia

RALOXIFENE, CONJUGATED ESTROGENS/BAZEDOXIFENE

- Alternative to bisphosphonates if high risk of vertebral fractures
- Increased risk for VTE and stroke
- Raloxifene can be used if low VTE risk or high breast cancer risk
  - Can cause vasomotor symptoms
- *Duavee* can be used in females with an intact uterus for prevention of osteoporosis
  - Also used as treatment for vasomotor symptoms
  - Can increase risk of breast cancer

LAST LINE OR NOT RECOMMENDED

- Estrogen (± progestin) for prevention only in postmenopausal females with vasomotor symptoms; use lowest possible dose for shortest duration of time
- Calcitonin for treatment only (less effective, risk of cancer with long-term use)

BISPHOSPHONATES

Bisphosphonates increase bone density by inhibiting osteoclast activity and bone resorption. They reduce vertebral and hip fracture risk (except ibandronate, which only reduces vertebral fractures). Bisphosphonates are first-line for most patients for the prevention or treatment of osteoporosis. A drug holiday (i.e., time off of the drug) should be considered for low-risk patients after 3 – 5 years of treatment. Bisphosphonates are also used to treat Paget's disease, glucocorticoid-induced osteoporosis (in patients taking ≥ 7.5 mg daily of prednisone or prednisone equivalent) and hypercalcemia of malignancy.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Oral Bisphosphonates		
Alendronate ***(Fosamax,*** ***Binosto)*** Tablet, oral solution, effervescent tablet *(Binosto)* + cholecalciferol *(Fosamax Plus D)* Tablet	**Prevention (postmenopausal females)** 5 mg daily or 35 mg weekly **Treatment (males and postmenopausal females)** 10 mg daily or 70 mg weekly *Fosamax Plus D:* 70 mg/2,800 IU or 70 mg/5,600 IU weekly **Glucocorticoid-Induced Osteoporosis** 5 mg daily Postmenopausal females not on estrogen: 10 mg daily	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Hypocalcemia; inability to stand or sit upright for at least 30 mins (60 mins for ibandronate); esophageal abnormalities (e.g., stricture); high risk of aspiration (effervescent tablet, PO solution) **WARNINGS** ONJ: ↑ risk with invasive dental procedures, poor dental hygiene, cancer, use with chemotherapy or corticosteroids, duration of use Atypical femur fractures; bone, joint or muscle pain (severe) Esophagitis, esophageal ulcers, erosions, stricture or perforation (rare): follow admin instructions (see Key Counseling Points) Hypocalcemia must be corrected prior to use Renal impairment: do not use if CrCl < 35 mL/min (alendronate) or CrCl < 30 mL/min (ibandronate, risedronate) **SIDE EFFECTS** Dyspepsia, dysphagia, heartburn, N/V, hypocalcemia, hypophosphatemia, abdominal or musculoskeletal pain Risedronate: headache, hypertension, skin rash, UTI, infection **NOTES** Check calcium and vitamin D levels prior to initiating treatment Due to the risk of jaw decay/necrosis, dental work should be completed prior to starting treatment Use caution with aspirin or NSAIDs (can worsen GI irritation) Separate calcium, antacids, iron and magnesium by at least 2 hrs Separate at least 30 mins from food and drinks (except water) *Atelvia* (delayed-release): requires an acidic gut for absorption; do not use with H2RAs and PPIs
Risedronate *(Actonel, Atelvia)* Tablet, delayed-release tablet *(Atelvia)*	**Prevention and Treatment (postmenopausal females)** 5 mg daily, 35 mg weekly, or 150 mg monthly **Treatment (males)** 35 mg weekly **Glucocorticoid-Induced Osteoporosis** 5 mg daily	
Ibandronate Tablet	**Prevention and Treatment (postmenopausal females)** 150 mg monthly (on the same date every month)	
Injectable Bisphosphonates		
Ibandronate Injection	**Treatment (postmenopausal females)** 3 mg IV every 3 months Administer over 15-30 secs	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Hypocalcemia Zoledronic acid: CrCl < 35 mL/minute or acute renal impairment **WARNINGS** Same as oral bisphosphonates (except no GI problems) plus: Renal impairment: SCr before each dose; caution if dehydrated, comorbid conditions or medications that cause renal impairment Ibandronate: do not use if CrCl < 30 mL/min Zoledronic acid: use caution in aspirin-sensitive asthma (risk of bronchoconstriction), avoid in pregnancy (teratogenic) **SIDE EFFECTS** Same as oral bisphosphonates (except no esophageal problems) plus: Acute-phase reaction: flu-like symptoms (fever, aches, runny nose, HA) Zoledronic acid: edema, ↓ BP, fatigue, dehydration, ↓ PO4, K, Mg **NOTES** Preferred if esophagitis (due to risk for esophageal cancer)
Zoledronic Acid ***(Reclast)*** ***Zometa*** – for hypercalcemia of malignancy	**Prevention (postmenopausal females)** 5 mg IV every 2 years **Treatment (males and postmenopausal females)** 5 mg IV once yearly **Glucocorticoid-Induced Osteoporosis** 5 mg IV once yearly Administer over ≥ 15 mins	

ESTROGEN AGONIST/ANTAGONIST-CONTAINING PRODUCTS

Raloxifene is an estrogen agonist/antagonist [selective estrogen receptor modulator (SERM)] that ↓ bone resorption. Conjugated estrogens/bazedoxifene is an equine (horse) estrogen/SERM combination indicated for osteoporosis prevention in postmenopausal females with a uterus.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Raloxifene ***(Evista)*** Tablet	**Prevention and Treatment (postmenopausal females)** 60 mg PO daily	**BOXED WARNINGS** Risk of VTE (DVT/PE); risk of death due to stroke in females with CHD or at risk for coronary events **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Pregnancy, history of or current VTE **SIDE EFFECTS** Hot flashes, peripheral edema, arthralgia, leg cramps, flu symptoms, infection **NOTES** Separate raloxifene and levothyroxine by several hours Discontinue 72 hours prior to and during prolonged immobilization
Conjugated Estrogens/ Bazedoxifene *(Duavee)*	**Prevention (postmenopausal females with a uterus)** 1 tablet (0.45/20 mg) PO daily Other indications: treatment of moderate-severe vasomotor symptoms associated with menopause (same dose)	**BOXED WARNINGS** Endometrial cancer (due to unopposed estrogen); risk of DVT and stroke in postmenopausal females age 50-79 years (do not use to prevent CVD); dementia (age ≥ 65 years); use lowest effective dose for shortest duration possible **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Breast cancer (any history); pregnancy; undiagnosed uterine bleeding; history of or active VTE, MI or stroke; protein C, S or antithrombin deficiency; hepatic impairment **WARNINGS** ↑ risk of breast cancer (due to unopposed estrogen) and ovarian cancer; ↑ risk of retinal vascular thrombosis; lipid effects (↑ HDL, ↑ TG, ↓ LDL) **SIDE EFFECTS** Nausea, diarrhea, dyspepsia, abdominal pain, muscle spasms **NOTES** Not recommended for age > 75 years Use estrogen-containing products for the shortest duration possible

CALCITONIN

Calcitonin inhibits bone resorption by osteoclasts. It is less effective than other drugs for the treatment of osteoporosis and, with long-term use, the risk of cancer is increased. It is rarely used for this indication.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Calcitonin ***(Miacalcin)*** Nasal spray, injection Can be used for hypercalcemia of malignancy	**Treatment (females > 5 years postmenopause)** Nasal spray: 1 spray (200 units) in one nostril daily (alternate nostril daily) SC or IM: 100 units daily	**WARNINGS** Hypocalcemia (with tetany and seizures); risk of malignancy if long-term use; hypersensitivity reaction to salmon-derived products; antibody formation Nasal spray: nasal ulceration, epistaxis, rhinitis; nasal exams recommended **SIDE EFFECTS** Back pain, myalgia, nausea, dizziness; Injection: flushing, injection site reactions **NOTES** Keep the injection and unopened nasal spray bottles refrigerated

PARATHYROID HORMONE 1-34

Teriparatide and abaloparatide are analogs of human parathyroid hormone, which stimulates osteoblast activity and increases bone formation. They are used to treat osteoporosis when there is a very high risk of fracture (e.g., history of vertebral fracture). Due to safety issues, the cumulative lifetime treatment duration is restricted to two years or less.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Teriparatide *(Forteo)* Injection (prefilled multi-dose pen; needles not included)	**Treatment (males and postmenopausal females)** 20 mcg SC daily **Glucocorticoid-Induced Osteoporosis** 20 mcg SC daily	**WARNINGS** Osteosarcoma (bone cancer): risk dependent on dose and duration of use, do not use in bone malignancy or metabolic bone diseases Hypercalcemia; orthostatic hypotension; use caution with urolithiasis (urinary stones) **SIDE EFFECTS** Arthralgias, leg cramps, nausea, orthostasis/dizziness *Tymlos:* ↑ uric acid, antibody development, erythema at injection site **NOTES** Keep refrigerated *Forteo:* protect from light
Abaloparatide *(Tymlos)* Injection (prefilled pen; needles not included)	**Treatment (males and postmenopausal females)** 80 mcg SC daily	

RECEPTOR ACTIVATOR OF NUCLEAR FACTOR KAPPA-B LIGAND (RANKL) INHIBITOR

Denosumab is a monoclonal antibody that binds to RANKL and blocks its interaction with RANK (a receptor on osteoclasts) to prevent osteoclast formation; this leads to ↓ bone resorption and ↑ bone mass. It is used for the treatment of osteoporosis when there is a high risk of fracture.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Denosumab *(Prolia, Jubbonti, Ospomyv)* Injection ***Xgeva, Wyost, Xbryk:*** hypercalcemia of malignancy, bone cell tumor, prevention of bone metastasis Other indications: bone loss in males on androgen deprivation therapy and females on aromatase inhibitor therapy	**Treatment (males and postmenopausal females)** 60 mg SC every 6 months Must be administered by a healthcare professional	**BOXED WARNING** Risk for severe hypocalcemia if advanced kidney disease (dialysis) **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Hypocalcemia (correct prior to using); pregnancy **WARNINGS** ONJ: ↑ risk with invasive dental procedures, poor dental hygiene, cancer, use with chemotherapy or corticosteroids, duration of use Atypical femur fractures; bone, joint or muscle pain (may be severe) Hypocalcemia: use caution in predisposed patients (e.g., thyroid surgery, hypoparathyroidism, malabsorption, CrCl < 30 mL/min) Infections (skin, UTI); skin reactions (e.g., dermatitis, eczema, rash) **SIDE EFFECTS** Hypertension, fatigue, edema, N/V/D, ↓ PO4, dyspnea, headache **NOTES** If discontinued, bone loss can be rapid; consider alternative drugs to maintain BMD

ROMOSOZUMAB

Romosozumab is indicated for postmenopausal females with a history of an osteoporotic fracture or multiple risk factors. It is an alternative to other treatments. It inhibits sclerostin, a protein that blocks bone formation.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Romosozumab *(Evenity)* Injection	**Treatment** 210 mg SC (administered in two separate injections) once a month Duration of therapy is limited to 12 months (due to decreased efficacy after this time)	**BOXED WARNINGS** Increased risk of MI, stroke and cardiovascular death **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Hypocalcemia **SIDE EFFECTS** Arthralgia, headache, injection site reactions **NOTES** Keep refrigerated; keep at room temp for 30 min before injection

OSTEOPOROSIS KEY COUNSELING POINTS

See the Drug Formulations and Patient Counseling chapter for counseling language/layman's terminology.

ALL OSTEOPOROSIS MEDICATIONS

- Must supplement with calcium and vitamin D.
  - Do not take calcium carbonate with proton pump inhibitors (acidic gut is needed for absorption).
  - Switch to calcium citrate if use of a proton pump inhibitor is required.

BISPHOSPHONATES

- Oral formulations (except *Atelvia)*: take in the morning with 6 – 8 oz of water at least 30 minutes before first food. Take *Atelvia* with ≥ 4 oz of water immediately after breakfast.
  - Must stay sitting or standing upright for at least 30 minutes after taking (at least 60 minutes with ibandronate) and until after first food of the day.
  - Separate from calcium, iron, magnesium, antacids and multivitamin supplements.
- Dissolve *Binosto* in 4 oz of water (room temp). Wait five minutes to dissolve, then stir for 10 seconds.
- Do not take acid-suppressing drugs with *Atelvi*.
- Can cause dyspepsia.
- Missed dose:
  - Daily dosing: skip missed dose; take next dose at regularly scheduled time.
  - Weekly dosing: take missed dose the next morning; do not take two doses on same day.
  - Monthly dosing: take missed dose the morning after you remember, unless it is less than one week from the next dose, then skip it; do not take two doses in the same week.

RALOXIFENE

- Can cause blood clots.
- Discontinue at least 72 hours prior to and during prolonged immobilization (e.g., surgery requiring bed rest).

TERIPARATIDE AND ABALOPARATIDE

- Can cause:
  - Dizziness.
  - Orthostasis.
- Treatment duration should not exceed 2 years.

CALCITONIN NASAL SPRAY

- Refrigerate unused bottles.
- Allow bottle to reach room temperature prior to use, then store at room temp. Discard after 30 doses.
- Prime the pump before first use by pressing the two white side arms toward the bottle, releasing at least five sprays, until a full spray is produced.
- Alternate nostrils each day.

MENOPAUSE

BACKGROUND

Menopause is reached when the last menstrual period was over 12 months ago. Menopause usually occurs between age 40 – 58 years. A decrease in estrogen and progesterone causes an increase in follicle stimulating hormone (FSH), resulting in vasomotor symptoms. Many females experience these symptoms during the menopause transition period (perimenopause) as estrogen production by the ovaries declines. These are often described as hot flashes (episodes of flushing and a sensation of heat in the upper body and face, sometimes followed by chills) and night sweats (hot flashes that occur during sleep). Sleep can be disturbed, and mood changes may be present. Due to ↓ estrogen in the vaginal mucosa, vaginal dryness, burning and dyspareunia (painful intercourse) can occur (called genitourinary syndrome of menopause).

Some females are asymptomatic during menopause, while others have severe symptoms that impact quality of life. Vasomotor symptoms can last up to seven years. Females who have both ovaries removed, or receive chemotherapy or radiation, can experience induced menopause. The symptoms are similar but often more acute due to a sudden decline in estrogen (rather than a natural, gradual decline).

ESTROGEN-PROGESTIN PRODUCTS

The most effective treatment for vasomotor symptoms is systemic hormone therapy with estrogen. Estrogen causes a decrease in luteinizing hormone (LH) and more stable temperature control. It improves bone density as well, but has safety issues to consider before initiating. The North American Menopause Society (NAMS) and the American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists (AACE) provide criteria for the use of estrogen to control vasomotor symptoms. See the Study Tip Gal for appropriate use and risks.

FORMULATION CONSIDERATIONS

Transdermal, local (topical) and low-dose oral estrogen products are associated with a lower risk of venous thromboembolism (VTE) and stroke than standard doses of oral estrogen. Topical formulations (e.g., patch, gel, emulsion) bypass first-pass metabolism and lower doses can be used. They may decrease systemic exposure, resulting in fewer side effects.

Local estrogen products are preferred for patients who have vaginal symptoms only (vaginal dryness and/or painful intercourse). Any of the vaginal products in this chapter (creams, tablets, rings) or OTC lubricants (discussed later in the products for dyspareunia section) can be helpful for localized symptoms.

HORMONE THERAPY: HEALTH RISKS AND APPROPRIATE USE

Estrogen

- Most effective treatment for vasomotor symptoms.
- With a uterus: use with a form of progesterone (e.g., progestin). Unopposed estrogen ↑ risk of endometrial cancer.
- Associated boxed warnings for: VTE, stroke, dementia, breast cancer (bigger concern in elderly).

Progestin

- Progestins (e.g., norethindrone, levonorgestrel, drospirenone) can be given as part of a combination pill (with estrogen) or as a separate tablet, most commonly medroxyprogesterone.
- Can cause mood disturbances; if taken intermittently (e.g., for two weeks per month), spotting can occur.
- Micronized progestins are considered to be safer than synthetic progestins (e.g., medroxyprogesterone).

CRITERIA FOR USE OF HORMONE THERAPY

- Healthy, symptomatic females within 10 years of menopause, age ≤ 60 years and no contraindications to use.
- Consider discontinuing systemic estrogen beyond age 60 years; if used, use the lowest possible dose and advise the patient of the safety risks. Vaginal estrogen is acceptable.
- Consider quality-of-life priorities and risk factors (e.g., age, time since menopause, risk of blood clots, heart disease, stroke, breast cancer); if risk factors use non-hormonal treatment (e.g., SSRIs, SNRIs, fezolinetant).

COMMON HORMONE THERAPY PRODUCTS

Estradiol-containing products and conjugated estrogens are used primarily for vasomotor symptoms, vaginal atrophy and osteoporosis prevention. Oral contraceptives, used for contraception, contain ethinyl estradiol (see the Contraception & Infertility chapter).

COMPONENTS	FORMULATION	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Local Hormone Therapies		
17-Beta-Estradiol	Vaginal cream ***(Estrace)*** Vaginal ring ***(Estring)*** Vaginal tablet ***(Vagifem)*** Vaginal insert *(Imvexxy)*	**NOTES** Topical (vaginal) hormone products may have lower systemic absorption, but some may still occur; the safety issues below should be considered
Conjugated Equine Estrogens	Vaginal cream ***(Premarin)***: 0.625 mg/gram	
Systemic Hormone Therapies		
Estradiol	Topical gel *(Elestrin)* Transdermal patch ***(Climara, Vivelle-Dot,*** *Menostar, Minivelle)* Vaginal ring *(Femring)*	**BOXED WARNINGS** Endometrial cancer (if estrogen used without progestin in female with a uterus); dementia (age ≥ 65 years); risk of VTE and stroke in postmenopausal females age 50-79 years (do not use to prevent CVD); breast cancer; use lowest effective dose for shortest duration possible *Evamist:* secondary exposure can cause breast budding and breast masses in prepubertal females, and gynecomastia and breast masses in prepubertal males; keep children away from spray/application site **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Estrogen-containing products: breast cancer; VTE, undiagnosed uterine bleeding; arterial thromboembolic disease, known protein C, S or antithrombin deficiency; hepatic impairment; pregnancy **WARNINGS** ↑ risk of breast cancer (from use of estrogen alone) and ovarian cancer; ↑ risk of retinal vascular thrombosis; lipid effects (↑ HDL, ↑ TG, ↓ LDL) **SIDE EFFECTS** Edema, hypertension, headache, weight gain, depression, nausea, abdominal pain Patch: skin redness/irritation, remove prior to an MRI *CombiPatch:* store in the fridge before dispensing; once dispensed, can keep at room temp up to 6 mos *Vivelle-Dot* and *Minivelle* are applied twice weekly; *Climara* and *Menostar* patches are once weekly Gels and *Evamist* spray are flammable Micronized progestin (in combination with estrogen) may have a lower risk of breast cancer and cardiovascular events than synthetic progestin, medroxyprogesterone (in combination with estrogen)
17-Beta-Estradiol	Oral tablet, micronized Topical gel *(Divigel, Estrogel)* Topical spray *(Evamist)*	
Estradiol and Levonorgestrel	Transdermal patch *(ClimaraPro)* "Pro" indicates it has a progestin	
Estradiol and Norethindrone	Transdermal patch *(CombiPatch)* Oral tablet *(Activella, Amabelz)*	
Estradiol and Drospirenone	Oral tablet *(Angeliq)*	
Conjugated Equine Estrogens	Oral tablet ***(Premarin)***: 0.3, 0.45, 0.625, 0.9, 1.25 mg Injection ***(Premarin)***	
Conjugated Equine Estrogens and Medroxyprogesterone (MPA)	Oral tablet *(Prempro)*: 0.3/1.5, 0.45/1.5, 0.625/2.5, 0.625/5 mg Oral tablet *(Premphase)*: phasic dosing – 0.625 mg on days 1-14, then 0.625/5 mg on days 15-28	
Medroxyprogesterone *Depo-Provera* – SC or IM for contraception	Oral tablets ***(Provera)***: 2.5, 5, 10 mg	
Micronized progesterone	Oral tablet ***(Prometrium)***	
Conjugated Estrogens/ Bazedoxifene	Oral tablet *(Duavee)*	

"BIOIDENTICAL" NOMENCLATURE

Some females prefer bioidentical hormones to treat symptoms, including commercially available products approved by the FDA or compounded preparations. *Bijuva* is an oral capsule and the first FDA-approved bioidentical estradiol and progesterone combination to treat moderate-severe hot flashes. The term "bioidentical" has different meanings; some use it to refer to hormones that have an identical structure to those found in the female body, while others use it to refer to plant-derived hormones that are compounded. There are no well-designed studies to confirm risk or benefit of bioidentical hormone therapy, and the AACE does not recommend bioidentical hormones to treat menopausal symptoms.

ESTROGEN-PROGESTIN KEY COUNSELING POINTS

See the Drug Formulations and Patient Counseling chapter for counseling/layman's terminology.

- Topical gels for systemic absorption: apply once daily; wash hands after applying.
  - ☐ Apply *Divigel* to the upper thigh (alternate legs).
  - ☐ Apply *Elestrin* to the upper arm and shoulder.
  - ☐ Apply *Estrogel* to the arm from wrist to shoulder.
- *Evamist* spray: spray on the inside of the forearm (between elbow and wrist) every morning.
- Patch: apply to lower abdomen, below the waistline.

PRODUCTS FOR DYSPAREUNIA

Ospemifene is an estrogen agonist/antagonist indicated for dyspareunia and moderate-severe vaginal dryness, which are symptoms of vaginal atrophy due to menopause. It is not indicated for mild symptoms (other topical vaginal products are safer). Ospemifene should be used short-term. *Intrarosa* (prasterone), a vaginally inserted steroid, is another treatment for moderate-severe dyspareunia. Common OTC lubricants and moisturizers can also help with local symptoms, such as *Replens* and *Luvena*. *Astroglide* is a lubricant marketed for dyspareunia. Oil-based lubricants should not be used with condoms as they can cause the condom to tear.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Estrogen Agonist/Antagonist		
Ospemifene *(Osphena)* Tablet	60 mg PO daily Take with food	**BOXED WARNINGS/CONTRAINDICATIONS** Same as for other estrogen-containing products **WARNING** Should not be used with severe hepatic impairment **SIDE EFFECTS** Hot flashes, vaginal discharge, hyperhidrosis, muscle spasms

NONHORMONAL PRODUCTS FOR MENOPAUSAL VASOMOTOR SYMPTOMS

While hormone therapy is the most effective treatment for vasomotor symptoms, some patients may choose to avoid hormone therapy or have contraindications. There are several nonhormonal options for these patients.

SSRIs AND SNRIs

Paroxetine *(Brisdelle)* is approved for moderate-severe vasomotor symptoms associated with menopause. The dose used is lower than the dose for depression. Paroxetine should not be used with tamoxifen or warfarin. Paroxetine is a CYP2D6 inhibitor; it will decrease the effectiveness of tamoxifen (a prodrug). Other SSRIs (e.g., citalopram, escitalopram) and SNRIs (e.g., venlafaxine, desvenlafaxine) have shown efficacy in treating vasomotor symptoms, but are not FDA-approved for this indication. Fluoxetine and sertraline are not recommended because of negligible benefit. See the Depression chapter for safety issues and side effects.

NEUROKININ B ANTAGONIST

Fezolinetant is a neurokinin B antagonist that modulates neuronal activity in the thermoregulatory center and FDA-approved for moderate to severe vasomotor symptoms associated with menopause.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Neurokinin B Antagonist		
Fezolinetant *(Veozah)* Tablet	45 mg PO daily Take with liquids at about the same time each day	**BOXED WARNINGS** Hepatotoxicity **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Known cirrhosis, severe renal impairment, use with CYP1A2 inhibitors **SIDE EFFECTS** Hot flashes, abdominal pain, diarrhea, ↑ ALT/AST, back pain

OTHER DRUGS

Gabapentin and oxybutynin ↓ vasomotor symptoms, but side effects make other options preferred. Clonidine and pregabalin can be used for vasomotor symptoms, but due to side effects, are not recommended.

NATURAL PRODUCTS

Natural products for vasomotor symptoms include black cohosh, evening primrose oil, red clover, soy, flaxseed, dong quai, St. John's wort and chasteberry. Evidence of efficacy is very limited; they are not recommended over other products.

NON-PHARMACOLOGIC INTERVENTIONS

Cognitive behavioral therapy, clinical hypnosis and weight loss have shown efficacy in reducing vasomotor symptoms and are recommended. Other lifestyle modifications (e.g., cooling techniques, yoga, avoiding triggers, dietary modifications, exercise) have not demonstrated effectiveness.

HYPOGONADISM IN MALES

Hypogonadism can be due to age-related decline in testosterone, or secondary to a medical condition, surgery or drugs that lower testosterone. Medications that lower testosterone include opioids (especially methadone), chemotherapy for prostate cancer (see Oncology chapter), cimetidine and spironolactone.

TESTOSTERONE USE

Some males request testosterone treatment for "Low T" symptoms to increase libido, sexual performance, muscle mass, bone density, energy, memory and concentration. The use of testosterone replacement for conditions other than accepted medical uses is controversial, and a clear benefit of improved sexual function is not established. The FDA recommends treatment only in males with low testosterone levels caused by certain medical conditions and confirmed by laboratory tests.

There have been reports of increased clotting risk with testosterone therapy. Most patients had a higher risk at baseline, and the link to testosterone use is unclear. Testosterone ↑ hematocrit, which can ↑ clotting risk.

Testosterone can cause noncancerous prostate growth and use is restricted in males with severe BPH. When using a 5 alpha-reductase inhibitor for BPH (e.g., finasteride) to block the conversion of testosterone to an active form, testosterone products counteract this mechanism. Side effects of testosterone include male pattern baldness, acne and gynecomastia.

Testosterone and anabolic androgenic steroids carry a warning for abuse potential and risk of serious adverse events. When used at higher than prescribed doses, adverse outcomes include MI, heart failure, stroke, depression, aggression, liver toxicity and infertility. Abuse of testosterone can cause withdrawal symptoms, such as depression, fatigue, irritability, loss of appetite, decreased libido and insomnia.

TESTOSTERONE FORMULATIONS

Testosterone comes in many formulations, including parenteral (IM or SC) injections, topical gels and solutions. The injections are painful, and patients may report feeling symptomatic when it is getting close to the time for the next dose. The injections can increase hematocrit more than topical formulations. *Testopel* is a SC pellet implanted under the skin. Oral formulations of testosterone undecanoate are FDA-approved for hypogonadism due to medical conditions (and not age-related hypogonadism).

The gel formulations are popular and well tolerated. The gel must dry prior to dressing and others should not touch the application area, as this increases the risk of drug transfer. If the drug transfers to a child, it can cause "early virilization," and depending on the dose received, the child could have enlarged genital organs, aggressive behavior and premature pubic hair growth. The risk of early virilization is a boxed warning and requires counseling (see the Testosterone Key Counseling Points section).

TESTOSTERONE PRODUCTS: C-III

TESTOSTERONE	DOSING/ COUNSELING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Topical Gels and Solutions		**BOXED WARNINGS** Topical gel/solution: secondary exposure to testosterone in children can result in virilization; children should avoid contact with topical application sites Oral testosterone undecanoate and SC testosterone ethanate: can ↑ BP *Aveed:* pulmonary oil microembolism reactions (cough, dyspnea, throat tightening, anaphylaxis) can be life-threatening; observe in healthcare setting for 30 mins after each injection; only available through *Aveed* REMS **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Breast cancer, prostate cancer, pregnancy, breastfeeding *Aveed:* allergy to castor oil or benzyl benzoate *Depo-Testosterone:* cardiac, hepatic or renal disease **WARNINGS** ↑ risk of breast cancer, prostate cancer, ↑ blood pressure, VTE, dyslipidemia, gynecomastia, polycythemia, priapism; use caution in hepatic impairment; may worsen BPH (↑ PSA) **SIDE EFFECTS** ↑ appetite, acne, edema, hepatotoxicity, ↓ sperm count, ↑ SCr, sensitive nipples, sleep apnea *Natesto:* nasal irritation Injections: pain at the site of injection **MONITORING** Testosterone levels, PSA, liver function, blood pressure, cholesterol, hematocrit (some products) **NOTES** Gel: apply same time each morning; flammable until dry *Xyosted* contains sesame oil
Testosterone gel *[AndroGel* (1%, 1.62%), ***AndroGel Pump*** (1.62%)]	*AndroGel* 1%: apply daily to upper arms, shoulders and/or abdomen 1.62%: apply to upper arms or shoulders (not the abdomen)	
Testosterone gel 1% *(Vogelxo, Vogelxo Pump)*	Apply to upper arms and shoulders daily	
Testosterone gel 1% *(Testim)*	Apply to arms and shoulders daily	
Testosterone gel 2% *(Fortesta*)*	Apply to front and inner thighs daily	
Testosterone solution	Apply to armpits daily	
Testosterone nasal gel *(Natesto)*	1 spray per nostril TID	
Alternative Formulations		
Injections: **Testosterone cypionate** *(Depo-Testosterone)*	IM every 1-2 weeks	
Testosterone undecanoate *(Aveed)*	IM every 4 weeks (2 doses), then every 10 weeks	
Testosterone enanthate	IM every 2-4 weeks	
Testosterone enanthate *(Xyosted)*	SC auto-injector weekly	
Implantable pellet *(Testopel)*	SC every 3-6 months	
Testosterone undecanoate oral capsule *(Jatenzo, Kyzatrex, Tlando)*	Administered BID	

*Brand discontinued but name still used in practice.

CHAPTER 50

SEXUAL DYSFUNCTION

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= Study Tip Gal = Key Drugs Guy

TESTOSTERONE KEY COUNSELING POINTS

See the Drug Formulations and Patient Counseling chapter for counseling/layman's terminology.

- Topical gels/solutions: do not let others contact the application site (secondary exposure can lead to adverse effects). Keep application site covered.
- For best absorption, wait 2 – 6 hours after applying gels/solutions before showering or swimming.
- Gels are flammable while wet; do not smoke or go near an open flame until dry.
- Apply deodorant before solutions to underarms.
- *AndroGel Pump:* before first use, prime pump three times. Do not apply the gel released during priming.
- *Natesto:* prime ten times, then insert the actuator into the nostril, depress slowly until the pump stops, remove from the nose while wiping the tip to transfer gel to the lateral side of the nostril, then press on the nose and lightly massage. Do not blow your nose or sniff for one hour after administration.

Select Guidelines/References

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BACKGROUND

Erectile dysfunction (ED), also called impotence, refers to difficulty getting or sustaining an erection that is firm enough for sex. This is a common type of sexual dysfunction in males and can generally be treated with phosphodiesterase-5 (PDE-5) inhibitors. Males can experience other types of sexual dysfunction, including problems with ejaculation and low libido, which is sometimes due to low testosterone levels. Testosterone treatment is discussed in the Osteoporosis, Menopause & Testosterone Use chapter.

In women, sexual dysfunction can be due to either an inability to reach orgasm (anorgasmia), painful intercourse or hypoactive (i.e., lower than normal) sexual desire disorder (HSDD). Flibanserin and bremelanotide are FDA-approved to treat HSDD for premenopausal women only.

In both males and females, sexual dysfunction can be due to the use of an SSRI or SNRI. An alternate antidepressant can be tried that does not cause sexual side effects, such as bupropion.

ERECTILE DYSFUNCTION

The most common cause of ED is reduced blood flow to the penis. This can be common in patients with cardiovascular diseases, such as hypertension and atherosclerosis, and conditions that cause neuropathy, such as diabetes. Since the arteries supplying blood to the penis are smaller than those supplying blood to the heart, they can become restricted sooner than the larger vessels. ED can be considered an early warning indicator of cardiovascular disease, and males with ED who have cardiovascular disease risk factors should be referred for cardiac evaluation. Psychological issues (including depression and stress) and neurological illness (spinal cord injury, stroke) can be contributory. Medications used for other conditions, including blood pressure lowering drugs used in cardiovascular diseases, can contribute to ED (see Key Drugs Guy).

DRUGS THAT CAN CAUSE ERECTILE/SEXUAL DYSFUNCTION

KEY DRUGS

Alcohol

Antidepressants
Especially SSRIs and SNRIs (including ↓ libido)

Antihypertensives
Beta-blockers, clonidine, thiazides

Antipsychotics
First-generation (e.g., chlorpromazine)

Prolactin-raising second-generation (e.g., risperidone, paliperidone)

BPH medications
Finasteride, dutasteride, and silodosin (mostly retrograde ejaculation)

Others:

Anticancer drugs: Leuprolide, flutamide

Anticholinergics

Atomoxetine

Digoxin

Cimetidine

Nicotine

Opioids (chronic use, especially methadone)

NON-DRUG TREATMENT

Lifestyle changes (e.g., weight loss, quitting tobacco, reducing alcohol intake) can improve ED. Underlying diseases that can contribute to ED should be managed, and any offending agents should be discontinued, if possible. Non-drug options that may have benefit are vacuum erection devices, penile implants and surgery.

NATURAL PRODUCTS

Natural products used to treat ED include yohimbe, L-arginine and panax ginseng. *The Natural Medicines Database* rates L-arginine (in high doses) and panax ginseng as "possibly effective." L-arginine can cause dizziness, headaches and flushing (similar to PDE-5 inhibitors, and the additive effects should be avoided), and ginseng can increase the risk of bleeding. Yohimbe is rated as "insufficient evidence," and can cause severe side effects, including tachycardia and arrhythmias.

There are many products marketed to "treat" ED. It is important to recognize that these products have not been tested and are not regulated by the FDA; many contain a false list of ingredients.

DRUG TREATMENT

PDE-5 inhibitors (sildenafil, vardenafil, tadalafil and avanafil) are first-line for the treatment of ED. These are often started at a low dose, then titrated as tolerated and to desired effect. Treatment success is defined by the patient and partner. Treatment failure could be due to a number of factors, such as lack of sexual stimulation, timing of the dose and eating a large meal with the dose. Efficacy appears to be similar among the most common PDE-5 inhibitors (sildenafil, vardenafil and tadalafil), but patients could consider switching between drugs if they do not achieve desired effect.

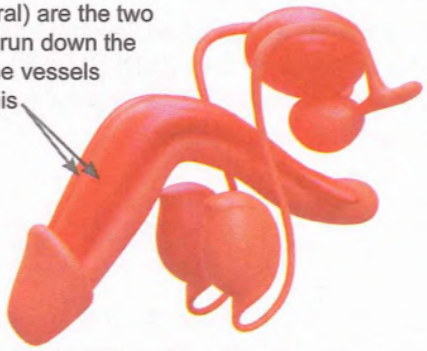
If a patient cannot tolerate or has a contraindication to PDE-5 inhibitors, alprostadil or eroxon can be used instead. Alprostadil is either injected into the penis or inserted into the penis with a urethral suppository. This treatment is invasive, painful and short-acting. Eroxon is an OTC, drug-free treatment with fast onset (~10 minutes). It is a topical gel that is applied to the head of the penis just prior to intercourse. Eroxon stimulates the nerve endings, which results in vasodilation and erection.

Two of the PDE-5 inhibitors used for ED are indicated for other conditions. Tadalafil (*Cialis*) is used for benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH) at a dose of 5 mg daily, which could treat concurrent ED. Sildenafil (*Revatio*) and tadalafil (*Adcirca, Alyq*) are indicated for pulmonary arterial hypertension (PAH). Patients should not be using two PDE-5 inhibitors concurrently due to the risk of additive side effects.

PHOSPHODIESTERASE TYPE 5 (PDE-5) INHIBITORS

Following sexual stimulation, there is a local release of nitric oxide, which increases cGMP and causes smooth muscle relaxation. This permits blood to flow in, resulting in an erection (see figure). PDE-5 inhibitors block PDE-5 from degrading cGMP. PDE-5 inhibitors do not increase libido (sexual interest), which must be present for the drugs to work. For safety, starting doses must be reduced in select conditions (see Study Tip Gal).

The corpora cavernosa (plural) are the two spongy tubular vessels that run down the length of the penis. When the vessels are filled with blood, the penis is hard and erect.



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Nitric oxide (NO) → guanylate cyclase → ↑ cGMP → relaxes the smooth muscle in the arteries → blood flows into the vessels → erection.

Phosphodiesterase type 5 (PDE-5) degrades cGMP.

PDE-5 INHIBITOR DOSING GUIDE

Typical starting dose

50 mg S
10 mg V T
100 mg A

Reduce dose if:

- ≥ 65 years
- Using an alpha-blocker
- Using a CYP3A4 inhibitor
- Severe renal or liver disease

↓ starting dose by 50%

25 mg S
5 mg V T
50 mg A

S sildenafil T tadalafil V vardenafil A avanafil

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DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Sildenafil *(Viagra)* ***Revatio*** – PAH	On-demand dosing: 25-100 mg daily PRN Start at 50 mg, take ~1 hr before sexual activity Start at 25 mg in select conditions	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Do not use with nitrates or riociguat (a guanylate cyclase stimulator). **WARNINGS** Impaired color discrimination (dose-related) – patients with retinitis pigmentosa may have higher risk. Hearing loss, with or without tinnitus/dizziness. Vision loss – rare, but can be due to nonarteritic anterior ischemic optic neuropathy (NAION). Risk factors include CAD and other vascular conditions, age > 50 yrs, Caucasian ethnicity. Avoid with retinal disorders. Hypotension, due to vasodilation. Higher risk with fluid depletion, resting BP < 90/50 mmHg or autonomic dysfunction. Priapism, seek emergency medical care if erection lasts > 4 hrs. CVD, caution with low or very high BP or recent cardiac events. If chest pain occurs, seek immediate medical help. **SIDE EFFECTS** Headache, flushing, dizziness, dyspepsia, blurred vision, difficulty with color discrimination, increased sensitivity to light, epistaxis, diarrhea, myalgia, muscle/back pain (mostly with tadalafil). **NOTES** Take with or without food. Sildenafil and vardenafil can have decreased efficacy if taken with a high-fat or large meal (common cause of treatment failure). For ED, no more than one dose per day is recommended. Avanafil can be taken closest to sexual activity.
Tadalafil *(Cialis)* ***Cialis*** – also used for BPH ***Adcirca, Alyq*** – PAH Lasts the longest – known as the "weekend pill"	Daily dosing: 2.5-5 mg daily Start at 2.5 mg; do not use daily dosing with severe renal or liver impairment On-demand dosing: 5-20 mg daily PRN Start at 10 mg, at least 30 min before sexual activity Start at 5 mg in select conditions CrCl 30-50 mL/min: 5 mg PRN CrCl < 30 mL/min: 5 mg PRN Q72H	
Vardenafil Available in ODT	On-demand dosing: 5-20 mg daily PRN Start at 10 mg, take ~1 hr before sexual activity Start with a lower dose in select conditions	
Avanafil *(Stendra)*	On-demand dosing: 50-200 mg daily PRN Start at 100 mg, take 15-30 min before sexual activity Start at 50 mg in select conditions	

PDE-5 Inhibitor Drug Interactions

- It is an absolute contraindication to use nitrates or riociguat with PDE-5 inhibitors. These combinations can cause severe hypotension. This includes any prescription nitrates (e.g., *Nitrostat, Nitrolingual Pumpspray*, and *BiDil*) or illicit alkyl nitrates ("poppers" such as amyl nitrate and butyl nitrate).
  - ☐ Avoid long-acting nitrates completely. If a patient with ED has taken a PDE-5 inhibitor and develops angina, short-acting nitroglycerin should not be used until after 12 hours for avanafil, after 24 hours for sildenafil or vardenafil, and after 48 hours for tadalafil. Occasionally, nitrates are used in an emergency with careful monitoring.
  - ☐ Riociguat should not be administered within 24 hours of sildenafil, or within 24 hours before or 48 hours after tadalafil.
- Use alcohol, alpha-blockers and antihypertensive drugs cautiously (due to additive hypotension).
  - ☐ If using a PDE-5 inhibitor and alpha-1 blocker together, the patient should be stable on the alpha-1 blocker (without excessive dizziness/hypotension) before starting the PDE-5 inhibitor. If using tadalafil with an alpha-1 blocker for BPH, a selective alpha-1 blocker is preferred and low doses of each medication should be used.
- Moderate and strong CYP450 3A4 inhibitors (e.g., grapefruit juice, protease inhibitors, azole antifungals) increase the levels of PDE-5 inhibitors; lower starting doses and/or extended dosing intervals are required. Strong CYP3A4 inducers decrease drug levels; monitor effectiveness.

ALPROSTADIL (PROSTAGLANDIN E1)

Alprostadil is prostaglandin E1, a vasodilator that allows blood to flow into the cavernosal arteries, which then enlarges the penis. It is either injected into the penis, or a pellet is inserted through the urethra. This treatment is invasive, painful and does not last as long as the PDE-5 inhibitors. Alprostadil is used in some men who cannot tolerate or have contraindications to PDE-5 inhibitors.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Alprostadil *(Caverject, Caverject Impulse, Edex)* Intracavernous injection Reconstitute prior to use	Injected into the base of the penis; erection should occur 5-10 minutes after injection and last ~1 hour	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Conditions that predispose the patient to priapism (e.g., sickle cell anemia, multiple myeloma, leukemia) **SIDE EFFECTS** Penile pain, priapism, headache, dizziness Intracavernous injection: hematoma, bruising at injection site Urethral pellets: urethral burning or bleeding **NOTES** Urethral pellets must be refrigerated
Alprostadil Urethral pellets	Inserted into the urethra	

HYPOACTIVE SEXUAL DESIRE DISORDER

Hypoactive sexual desire disorder (HSDD) is characterized by a low sexual desire that causes marked distress or interpersonal difficulty. The low sexual desire is not due to a health condition or drug.

DRUG TREATMENT

Flibanserin exhibits agonist activity at 5-HT1A and antagonist activity at 5-HT2A receptors. Bremelanotide is a nonselective melanocortin receptor agonist. The exact mechanism of how either of these medications treat HSDD is unknown. They are both indicated for use in premenopausal females only.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Flibanserin *(Addyi)*	100 mg QHS Discontinue if no benefit after 8 weeks	**BOXED WARNINGS** Contraindicated: with alcohol due to an ↑ risk of severe hypotension and syncope (REMS program required); in combination with moderate or strong CYP3A4 inhibitors; in patients with hepatic impairment **WARNINGS** Hypotension, syncope, CNS depression **SIDE EFFECTS** Dizziness, somnolence, nausea, fatigue, insomnia, dry mouth **NOTES** Avoid in pregnancy or if breastfeeding
Bremelanotide *(Vyleesi)* Injection	1.75 mg SC PRN, injected ≥ 45 minutes before sexual activity Maximum dose: 1.75 mg/24 hours; 8 doses per month Discontinue if no benefit after 8 weeks	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Do not use with uncontrolled hypertension or known cardiovascular disease **WARNINGS** ↑ BP and ↓ HR after each dose, skin hyperpigmentation, nausea, delayed gastric emptying **NOTES** Avoid in pregnancy; effective contraception should be used

FLIBANSERIN DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Use with CNS depressants will ↑ the risk of hypotension and syncope.
- Flibanserin is a major substrate of CYP3A4 and inhibits P-glycoprotein. Concurrent moderate-strong CYP3A4 inhibitors are contraindicated.

KEY COUNSELING POINTS

See the Drug Formulations and Patient Counseling chapter for counseling language/layman's terminology.

ALL PDE-5 INHIBITORS

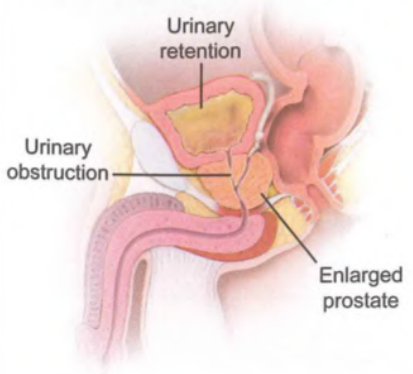
- Take approximately 15 minutes (avanafil), 30 minutes (tadalafil, when taken as needed) or 1 hour (sildenafil and vardenafil) before sexual activity.
- Sexual activity can put an extra strain on your heart. Stop sexual activity and get medical help right away if you have chest pain, dizziness or nausea during sexual activity.
- Can cause:
  - ☐ Priapism.
  - ☐ Orthostasis and decreased blood pressure. Do not take with nitrates; they worsen this effect.
  - ☐ Dizziness, headache, flushing and indigestion.
  - ☐ Ringing in the ears (tinnitus) or loss of hearing in one or both ears.
  - ☐ Vision changes, including blurry vision and changes to the look of colors (blue color tinge). Sudden vision loss in one or both eyes is a rare but serious side effect. Get medical help right away if this occurs.

TADALAFIL

Can cause muscle or back pain. This usually occurs 12 to 24 hours after taking, and can last up to two days.

Select Guidelines/References

Erectile Dysfunction: AUA Guideline (2018). http://www.auanet.org/guidelines/male-sexual-dysfunction-erectile-dysfunction-(2018).



CHAPTER 51

BENIGN PROSTATIC HYPERPLASIA (BPH)

@UWorld

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BACKGROUND

The prostate is a walnut-sized gland that surrounds the male urethra at the base of the bladder. As part of the male reproductive system, the main function of the prostate is to secrete fluid that becomes part of the seminal fluid carrying sperm.

Prostate growth and development is dependent on androgens, including testosterone, which is metabolized to its active form dihydrotestosterone (DHT) by 5 alpha-reductase. DHT is responsible for normal and hyperplastic prostate growth. Benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH) results from overgrowth of the stromal and epithelial cells of the prostate gland and can lead to prostate enlargement.

BPH occurs in most aging males but most commonly causes symptoms and impairs quality of life in patients greater than 65 years of age. The layer of tissue surrounding the overgrown prostate stops it from expanding, causing the gland to press against or pinch the urethra. This contributes to lower urinary tract symptoms (LUTS) (see the Symptoms and Complications section) via direct bladder outlet obstruction and increased smooth muscle tone and resistance. In some patients, these symptoms are exacerbated by other medications and substances (see Key Drugs Guy below).

DRUGS THAT CAN WORSEN BPH

Centrally-acting anticholinergics
(e.g., benztropine)

Drugs with anticholinergic effects:
Antihistamines (e.g., diphenhydramine)
Decongestants (e.g., pseudoephedrine)
Phenothiazines (e.g., prochlorperazine)
TCAs (e.g., amitriptyline)

Caffeine

Diuretics

SNRIs

Testosterone products

SYMPTOMS AND COMPLICATIONS

The signs and symptoms of BPH are mainly LUTS, which include:

- Hesitancy, intermittent urine flow, straining or a weak stream of urine.
- Urinary urgency and leaking or dribbling.
- Urinary frequency, especially nocturia (urination at night).
- Incomplete emptying of the bladder (bladder feels full).
- Bladder outlet obstruction.

Symptoms can be similar to prostate cancer, so all patients should be referred to a physician for an appropriate evaluation prior to starting treatment.

The frequency and severity of BPH symptoms should be assessed using the International Prostate Symptom Score (IPSS) questionnaire. In addition, the initial patient evaluation should include a medical history (surgeries, trauma and medications) and a physical exam. The physical exam should include a digital rectal exam (DRE) to determine the size of the prostate and identify any lumps or nodules (which could be concerning for cancer).

A urinalysis and serum prostate-specific antigen (PSA) are also recommended at baseline. PSA, a protein produced by prostate cells, is frequently increased in patients with prostate cancer, but can also be increased in patients with BPH, though BPH is a benign (non-cancerous) condition and does not increase prostate cancer risk.

BPH rarely causes more severe symptoms, but if the blockage is severe, the urine could back up into the kidneys and result in renal failure. Urinary tract infections can also occur.

TREATMENT PRINCIPLES

Treatment options for BPH can include watchful waiting, medications or surgical intervention. Mild disease is generally treated with watchful waiting and yearly reassessments. Moderate/severe disease is generally treated with medications or a minimally invasive procedure or surgery, such as transurethral resection of the prostate (TURP).

Medically-treated patients should follow up 4 – 12 weeks after starting treatment to assess response. A repeat IPSS should be obtained and, if needed, additional assessments, such as a post-void residual or uroflowmetry.

NATURAL PRODUCTS

The American Urological Association (AUA) guidelines do not recommend natural products for the treatment of BPH symptoms, though various natural products have been investigated. Saw palmetto is popular, but unlikely to be effective based on contradictory and inconsistent data. Pygeum, pumpkin seed (beta-sitosterol) and rye pollen are other natural products that have been proposed to improve BPH symptoms. Lycopene is used for prostate cancer prevention, but there is no good evidence for use in BPH.

DRUG TREATMENT

Medication options for patients with LUTS include alpha-blockers (selective or non-selective), 5 alpha-reductase inhibitors and the phosphodiesterase-5 (PDE-5) inhibitor tadalafil. Alpha-blockers are often used first line. 5 alpha-reductase inhibitors work by decreasing prostate size and should be used only in men who have LUTS with prostate enlargement (based on imaging, PSA level and/or DRE). Although tadalafil can be used in men with BPH alone, it can be an attractive option for men with both BPH and erectile dysfunction (ED).

Medications can be used alone or in combination, such as an alpha-blocker with either a 5 alpha-reductase inhibitor or (less commonly) tadalafil, or tadalafil plus the 5 alpha-reductase inhibitor finasteride.

In patients with moderate to severe predominant storage LUTS, an alpha-blocker may be used in combination with a peripherally-acting anticholinergic (e.g., tolterodine) or beta-3 receptor agonist (e.g., mirabegron). These anticholinergic medications are also used for overactive bladder and are discussed in the Urinary Incontinence chapter.

ALPHA-BLOCKERS

Alpha-1 blockers inhibit alpha-1 adrenergic receptors, causing relaxation of smooth muscle in the prostate and bladder neck. This reduces bladder outlet obstruction and improves urinary flow. There are three types of alpha-1 receptors. Alpha-1A receptors are primarily found in the prostate. Alpha-1B and alpha-1D receptors are dominant in the heart and arteries. The non-selective alpha-1 blockers (terazosin and doxazosin) have more side effects (e.g., orthostasis, dizziness, headache) than the selective alpha-1A blockers (tamsulosin, alfuzosin, silodosin).

INTRAOPERATIVE FLOPPY IRIS SYNDROME

The iris dilator muscle in the eye contains the same alpha receptors as the smooth muscle of the prostate and bladder neck. Patients using alpha-blockers are at risk of developing intraoperative floppy iris syndrome (IFIS) during cataract surgery. With alpha-1 blockade, the iris becomes floppy, has a risk of prolapse and the pupils do not dilate well, complicating the procedure. If cataract surgery is planned, alpha-blocker treatment should be delayed until the surgery has been completed.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Non-Selective Alpha-1 Blockers		**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Concurrent use of silodosin or alfuzosin with strong CYP3A4 inhibitors; hepatic impairment (Child-Pugh class C for silodosin, class B/C for alfuzosin); severe renal impairment (silodosin) **WARNINGS** Orthostatic hypotension/syncope, typically with the first dose, if therapy is interrupted for several days, if the dose is increased too rapidly, or if another antihypertensive drug or PDE-5 inhibitor is started Intraoperative floppy iris syndrome (IFIS) can occur in cataract surgery if currently treated or previously treated with an alpha-1 blocker Priapism, seek medical attention if an erection lasts > 4 hours Angina, discontinue if symptoms of angina begin or worsen **SIDE EFFECTS** Dizziness, fatigue, headache, abnormal ejaculation (especially with tamsulosin and silodosin), fluid retention Alfuzosin: QT prolongation **MONITORING** BP, PSA, urinary symptoms **NOTES** The non-selective drugs are often given at bedtime to help minimize the initial "first-dose" effect of orthostasis/dizziness; this requires counseling, as nocturia is common, and getting up at night to use the bathroom can be dangerous if dizziness and orthostasis occur. Alpha-blockers work quickly, but treatment for 4-6 weeks may be required to fully assess if LUTS are improved; they do not shrink the prostate and do not change PSA levels. *Cardura XL* is an OROS formulation (see Drug Formulations and Patient Counseling chapter) and can leave a ghost tablet (empty shell) in the stool. Silodosin can cause retrograde ejaculation in ~30% of patients. This is reversible upon drug discontinuation. Alpha-blockers can be used for bladder outlet obstruction in women (off-label).
Doxazosin ***(Cardura, Cardura XL)***	IR: start 1 mg at bedtime; titrate slowly up to 4-8 mg at bedtime XL: start 4 mg daily with breakfast; max 8 mg daily	
Terazosin	Start 1 mg at bedtime; titrate slowly to a max of 20 mg at bedtime (10 mg generally effective)	
Selective Alpha-1A Blockers		
Tamsulosin ***(Flomax)*** + dutasteride *(Jalyn)*	0.4 mg daily, 30 min after the same meal each day; max 0.8 mg daily	
Alfuzosin *(Uroxatral)*	10 mg daily, immediately after the same meal each day CrCl < 30 mL/min: use with caution	
Silodosin *(Rapaflo)*	8 mg daily with a meal CrCl 30-50 mL/min: 4 mg daily CrCl < 30 mL/min: do not use	

ALPHA-BLOCKER DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Use caution when co-administered with a PDE-5 inhibitor (sildenafil, tadalafil, vardenafil and avanafil) due to additive hypotensive effects (see the Sexual Dysfunction chapter). Caution should be used when combining tadalafil and an alpha-1 blocker to treat BPH; if this combination is initiated, a selective alpha-blocker is preferred and low doses of each medication should be used.
- Use caution with other drugs that lower BP.
- Tamsulosin, alfuzosin and silodosin are major CYP450 3A4 substrates; do not use with strong CYP3A4 inhibitors.
- Silodosin cannot be used with strong P-gp inhibitors, such as cyclosporine.
- Alfuzosin can cause QT prolongation; do not use with other QT-prolonging drugs. Use with caution in patients with cardiovascular disease.

5 ALPHA-REDUCTASE INHIBITORS

These medications inhibit the 5 alpha-reductase enzyme, which blocks the conversion of testosterone to dihydrotestosterone (DHT). Finasteride is selective for the 5 alpha-reductase type 2 enzyme (the more prevalent type within the prostate), while dutasteride inhibits both type 1 and type 2. This class of medications is indicated to treat symptomatic BPH in men with an enlarged prostate.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Finasteride *(Proscar)* ***Propecia*** – for alopecia (hair loss) at lower doses (1 mg daily) + tadalafil *(Entadfi)*	5 mg daily	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Women of child-bearing potential, pregnancy, children **WARNINGS** May ↑ risk of high-grade prostate cancer **SIDE EFFECTS** Impotence, ↓ libido, ejaculation disturbances, breast enlargement and tenderness, rash; sexual SEs ↓ with time and return to baseline at one year of use in some men **MONITORING** PSA, urinary symptoms **NOTES** 5 alpha-reductase inhibitors are on the NIOSH list of hazardous drugs. Pregnant women should not take or handle these medications, as the active ingredient can be absorbed through the skin from broken or crushed tablets and can be detrimental to the fetus. Delayed onset, treatment for 6 months (or longer) may be required for maximal efficacy. 5 alpha-reductase inhibitors shrink the prostate and ↓ PSA levels. Swallow dutasteride whole. Do not chew or open as contents can cause oropharyngeal irritation.
Dutasteride *(Avodart)* + tamsulosin *(Jalyn)*	0.5 mg daily Take *Jalyn* 30 min after the same meal each day	

5 ALPHA-REDUCTASE INHIBITOR DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Finasteride and dutasteride are minor CYP3A4 substrates; strong CYP3A4 inhibitors can ↑ levels.
- Do not use *Proscar* if using *Propecia* for hair loss.

PHOSPHODIESTERASE-5 INHIBITORS

The mechanism of action of PDE-5 inhibitors in treating BPH symptoms is not well known. They likely decrease smooth muscle and endothelial cell proliferation, decrease nerve activity, increase smooth muscle relaxation and tissue perfusion of the prostate and bladder. Tadalafil is the only PDE-5 inhibitor that is FDA-approved to treat BPH.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Tadalafil *(Cialis)* *Cialis* – also for ED ***Adcirca,*** *Alyq, Tadliq* – for pulmonary arterial hypertension (PAH) + finasteride *(Entadfi)*	5 mg daily, at the same time each day CrCl 30-50 mL/min: 2.5 mg initially, max of 5 mg daily CrCl < 30 mL/min: do not use Use 2.5 mg if taking a strong CYP3A4 inhibitor	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Do not use with nitrates or riociguat (a guanylate cyclase stimulator) **WARNINGS** Impaired color discrimination (dose-related), ↑ risk with retinitis pigmentosa Hearing loss, with or without tinnitus/dizziness Vision loss (rare), can be due to nonarteritic anterior ischemic optic neuropathy (NAION); avoid with retinal disorders Hypotension, due to vasodilation; higher risk with resting BP < 90/50 mmHg, fluid depletion or autonomic dysfunction CVD, caution with low or very high BP or recent CV events; seek immediate medical help for chest pain Priapism, seek emergency medical care if an erection lasts > 4 hrs **SIDE EFFECTS** Headache, flushing, dizziness, dyspepsia, muscle/back pain, myalgia, blurred vision, increased sensitivity to light, epistaxis, diarrhea **MONITORING** BP, PSA, urinary symptoms

- For drug interactions and key counseling points for tadalafil, see the Sexual Dysfunction chapter.

KEY COUNSELING POINTS

See the Drug Formulations and Patient Counseling chapter for counseling language/layman's terminology.

ALPHA-BLOCKERS

- Can cause orthostasis.
- Tell your healthcare provider about the use of this medication if having cataract surgery.

DOXAZOSIN AND TERAZOSIN

- Take at bedtime.
- Ghost tablet in stool *(Cardura XL)*.

SILODOSIN

- Can cause sexual dysfunction.

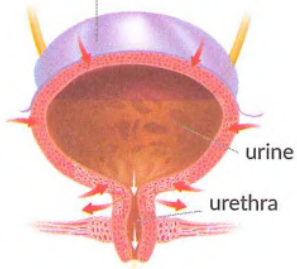
5 ALPHA-REDUCTASE INHIBITORS

- Can cause sexual dysfunction (decreased libido, ejaculation disturbances and erectile dysfunction).
- Avoid in pregnancy (teratogenic). Women who are or may become pregnant should not handle the tablets.

Select Guidelines/References

Sandhu JS, Bixler BR, Dahm P, et al. Management of lower urinary tract symptoms attributed to benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH): AUA Guideline amendment 2023. J Urol 2023;211:11-19.

Overactive Bladder
detrusor muscle contracting before bladder is full



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CHAPTER 52
URINARY INCONTINENCE

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BACKGROUND

Urinary incontinence is a common and debilitating urinary disorder that affects many people. It is not a normal sign of aging. Overactive bladder (OAB) is a syndrome of bothersome urinary symptoms, including:

- Urinary urgency: a sudden feeling of needing to urinate. This is the primary symptom of OAB; it can occur with or without incontinence and is usually accompanied by urinary frequency and nocturia.
- Urinary frequency: voiding ≥ 8 times per day.
- Nocturia: ≥ 2 awakenings in the night to urinate.
- Urinary incontinence: involuntary leakage of urine (see table for different forms).

About 1/3 of patients with OAB have incontinent episodes (OAB wet) and the other 2/3 of patients do not (OAB dry). Urge incontinence is a form of OAB wet that can be treated with the medications.

FORMS OF URINARY INCONTINENCE

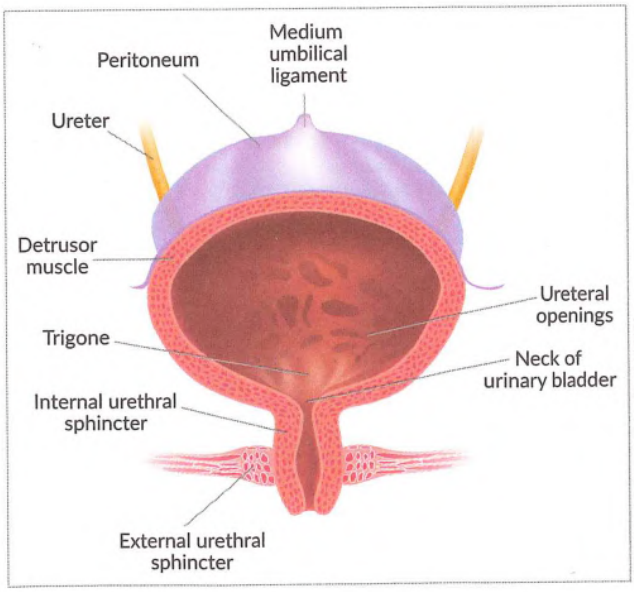
Urge	A sudden and unstoppable urge to urinate. Associated with neuropathy and often present in those with diabetes, strokes, dementia, Parkinson disease or multiple sclerosis (although people without comorbidities can be affected).
Stress	Urine leaks out during any form of exertion (e.g., exercise, coughing, sneezing, laughing) as a result of pressure on the bladder.
Mixed	Combination of urge and stress incontinence.
Functional	There is no abnormality in the bladder, but the patient may be cognitively, socially or physically impaired thus hindering access to a toilet (e.g., patients in wheelchairs).
Overflow	Leakage that occurs when the quantity of urine stored in the bladder exceeds its capacity. Often occurs without the urge to urinate (BPH is the most common cause).

Many comorbidities exist in patients with OAB, including falls and fractures, skin breakdown and skin infections, UTIs, depression and sexual dysfunction. There are also many social implications of OAB, including low self-esteem, lack of sexual intimacy, social and physical isolation, sleep disturbances, limits on travel and dependence on caregivers. These can lead to a reduced quality of life.

PATHOPHYSIOLOGY AND ETIOLOGY

The bladder is commonly referred to as a "balloon" with an outer muscular layer known as the detrusor muscle. The detrusor muscle and the bladder outlet functions are neurologically coordinated to store and expel urine. The detrusor muscle is innervated mainly by the parasympathetic nervous system (acetylcholine acting on muscarinic receptors), while the bladder neck is innervated by the sympathetic nervous system. The internal sphincter is innervated by the sympathetic nervous system and the external sphincter is innervated by the somatic nervous system. Both voluntary and involuntary contractions of the detrusor muscle are mediated by acetylcholine activation of muscarinic receptors.

In OAB, there is inappropriate stimulation of the muscarinic receptors on the detrusor muscle causing involuntary contractions and the feeling of urinary urgency. This is a contraction of the bladder even when it is not full. Of the five known muscarinic receptor subtypes, the human bladder is comprised of M2 and M3 receptors in a 3:1 ratio. The M3 receptor is responsible for both emptying contractions as well as involuntary bladder contractions.



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RISK FACTORS FOR OVERACTIVE BLADDER

- Age > 40 years
- Diabetes
- Prior vaginal delivery
- Obesity
- Neurologic conditions (e.g., Parkinson disease, stroke, dementia)
- Drugs that increase incontinence (e.g., alcohol, cholinesterase inhibitors, diuretics, sedatives)
- Restricted mobility
- Hysterectomy or pelvic injury

NON-DRUG TREATMENT

Behavioral therapies are considered first-line to improve symptoms of OAB. These include bladder training, delayed or scheduled voiding, pelvic floor muscle exercises (Kegel exercises), urge control techniques (distraction, self-assertions), fluid management, dietary changes (avoiding bladder irritants, such as caffeine), weight loss and other lifestyle measures (e.g., stopping medications that can worsen OAB; or with diuretics, changing the time of administration to avoid nocturia).

Behavioral therapies can be combined with other treatment modalities, such as medications. Surgical intervention should be reserved for the rare non-neurogenic patient who has failed all other therapeutic options and whose symptoms are intolerable.

DRUG TREATMENT

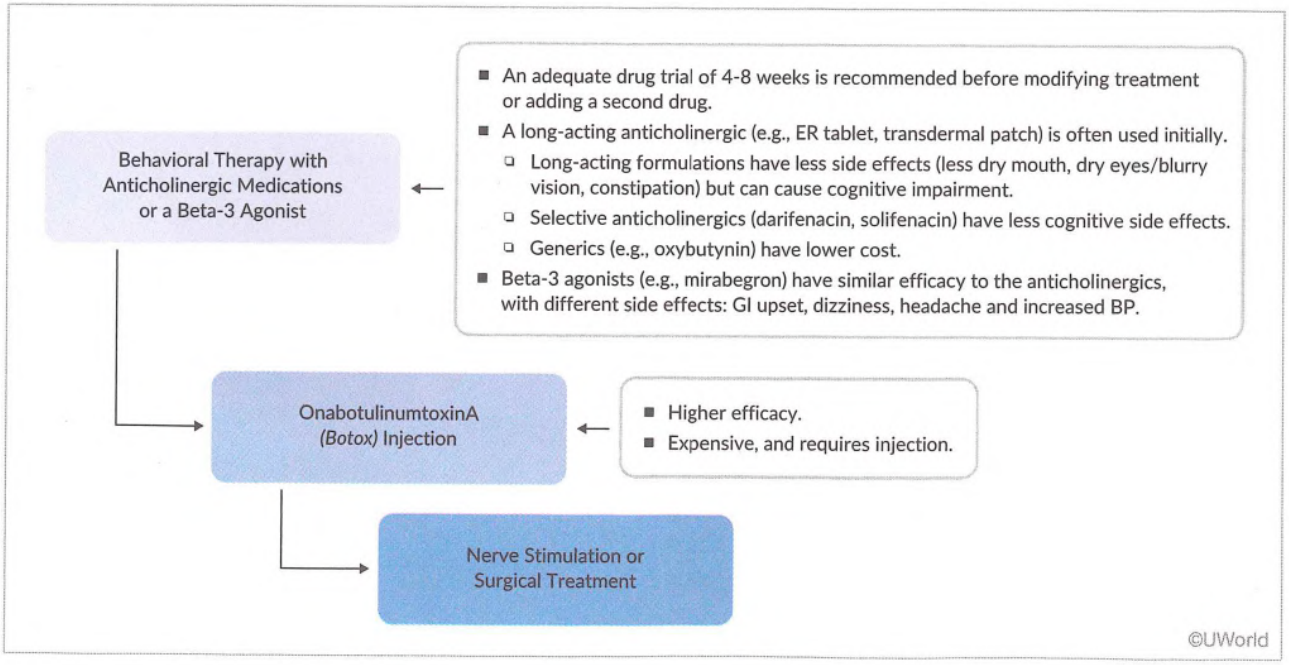
A step-wise approach is recommended that begins conservatively with behavioral therapy, either alone or in combination with other treatments (e.g., pharmacotherapy, nerve stimulation) if needed. Treatment decisions depend on the type of incontinence and the degree of severity felt by the patient; with severe symptoms, treatment can begin at a higher level.

URGE INCONTINENCE/ MIXED INCONTINENCE

Urge incontinence and mixed incontinence (which has an urge incontinence component) are treated similarly (see diagram below). First-line drugs include anticholinergics (e.g., oxybutynin) or a beta-3 receptor agonist (e.g., mirabegron).

OnabotulinumtoxinA *(Botox)* has higher efficacy but is not first-line due to cost and the route of administration through the urethra and into the detrusor muscle. Nerve stimulation or surgical intervention is used last.

Women with postmenopausal symptoms of vulvar and vaginal atrophy can use vaginal estrogen, which may provide modest relief of symptoms. Estrogen is not FDA-approved for this purpose. See the Osteoporosis, Menopause & Testosterone Use chapter.



ANTICHOLINERGIC DRUGS

Anticholinergic drugs, also called antimuscarinic drugs, competitively bind to muscarinic receptors and block acetylcholine from binding. This limits contractions of the detrusor muscle. Extended-release formulations are preferred over immediate-release formulations due to a lower risk of dry mouth. Drugs that are more selective for the M3 receptor (solifenacin, darifenacin and fesoterodine) have fewer CNS side effects than the older, non-selective drugs, such as oxybutynin. The Beers Criteria recommend avoiding anticholinergics in patients aged 65 years and older, due to a risk of delirium and cognitive impairment.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Oxybutynin IR	5 mg PO BID-QID	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Uncontrolled narrow angle glaucoma, urinary retention, gastric retention, ↓ gastric motility *Oxytrol for Women* OTC: pain or burning when urinating, blood in urine, unexplained lower back or side pain, cloudy or foul-smelling urine, male sex, age < 18 years, urinary or gastric retention, glaucoma, accidental urine loss only due to coughing, sneezing or laughing **WARNINGS** Agitation, confusion, drowsiness, dizziness, blurred vision, hallucinations, and/or headache, which may impair physical or mental abilities; use caution if performing tasks which require mental alertness (e.g., operating machinery, driving) Angioedema of the face, lips, tongue and/or larynx **SIDE EFFECTS** Dizziness and drowsiness (greatest with oxybutynin and less with the newer, selective drugs), xerostomia (dry mouth), constipation, dry eyes/blurred vision, urinary retention, application site reactions (with topical gel and patch) **NOTES** ↓ dose in renal impairment (CrCl < 30 mL/min) with fesoterodine, solifenacin, tolterodine, and trospium (do not use trospium XR) *Ditropan XL* is an OROS formulation (see the Drug Formulations and Patient Counseling chapter) and can leave a ghost shell (empty shell) in the stool Oxybutynin patch and gel cause less dry mouth and constipation than oral forms Transdermal patch: apply to the abdomen, hips or buttocks; avoid applying to the same site within 7 days; available OTC for women ≥ 18 years Package labeling is not clear if metals may be present in *Oxytrol* patch (Rx and OTC); consider removing before MRI Topical gel should be applied to dry, intact skin on the abdomen, thighs or upper arms/shoulders; rotate application sites
Oxybutynin ER *(Ditropan XL*)*	5-30 mg PO daily	
Oxybutynin patch *(Oxytrol* – Rx, *Oxytrol for Women* – OTC)	Apply one patch (3.9 mg/day) twice weekly (every 3-4 days)	
Oxybutynin 10% topical gel	Apply contents of 1 sachet (or 1 pump) daily	
Tolterodine *(Detrol)*	1-2 mg PO BID	
Tolterodine ER *(Detrol LA)*	2-4 mg PO daily	
Trospium IR	20 mg PO BID	
Trospium XR	60 mg PO daily Take on an empty stomach	
Solifenacin *(Vesicare)*	5-10 mg PO daily	
Darifenacin	7.5-15 mg PO daily	
Fesoterodine *(Toviaz)*	4-8 mg PO daily	

**Brand discontinued but name still used in practice.*

Anticholinergic Drug Interactions

- Additive effects can be seen when used with other medications that have anticholinergic side effects.
- The lowest dose of tolterodine, solifenacin, darifenacin and fesoterodine should be used if the patient is taking strong CYP450 3A4 inhibitors.
- Acetylcholinesterase inhibitors used for dementia (e.g., donepezil) ↑ acetylcholine in the CNS. Although OAB drugs primarily stay in the periphery, CNS side effects (e.g., memory impairment) are possible. While this is not a drug interaction, use of anticholinergic drugs can worsen dementia symptoms.

ANTICHOLINERGIC SIDE EFFECTS

Peripheral:	Central:
Dry mouth	Sedation
Dry eyes/blurred vision	Dizziness
Urinary retention	Cognitive impairment
Constipation	
Tachycardia	

DECREASING RISK OF DRY MOUTH

Dry mouth is a major reason for nonadherence with anticholinergic treatment. Choosing a treatment that minimizes dry mouth can improve adherence.

- Try extended-release formulations (↓ risk than IR).
- Try oxybutynin gel or patch (↓ risk than oral formulations).
- Beta-3 agonists have a ↓ incidence and can be helpful if anticholinergics are not tolerated.
- Try non-drug options to help with symptoms: avoid mouthwashes with alcohol, use ice chips, water, sugar-free candy or gum.

BETA-3 AGONISTS

Beta-3 agonists relax the detrusor muscle and increase bladder capacity by activating beta-3 receptors. Mirabegron and vibegron have similar efficacy to anticholinergic drugs but cause less dry mouth. They can be used in combination with anticholinergic drugs or as monotherapy.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Mirabegron *(Myrbetriq)*	25-50 mg PO daily CrCl 15-29 mL/min: 25 mg daily CrCl < 15 mL/min: not recommended	**WARNINGS** Urinary retention in patients with BPH and when used with anticholinergic drugs Mirabegron: ↑ BP, angioedema of the face, lips, tongue or larynx **SIDE EFFECTS** Nasopharyngitis, headache, constipation, diarrhea, dizziness, UTI (mirabegron) **NOTES** Efficacy seen within 8 weeks
Vibegron *(Gemtesa)*	75 mg PO daily	

Beta-3 Agonist Drug Interactions

- Mirabegron is a moderate CYP2D6 inhibitor. Use caution with drugs metabolized by CYP2D6. Levels of metoprolol are ↑ when co-administered with mirabegron. Levels of tamoxifen are ↓ when co-administered with mirabegron. Use caution in combination with digoxin (use lowest digoxin dose and monitor levels).

ONABOTULINUMTOXINA (*BOTOX*)

Botox is a third-line treatment for patients who are refractory to first- and second-line treatment options. It is administered intradetrusor (i.e., into the detrusor muscle) and affects the detrusor activity by inhibiting the release of acetylcholine.

DRUG	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
OnabotulinumtoxinA *(Botox)*	**BOXED WARNING** May spread from the injection site and cause symptoms consistent with botulinum toxin effects (e.g., asthenia, diplopia, swallowing and breathing difficulties); can be life-threatening **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Infection at the targeted injection site, urinary tract infection, urinary retention **SIDE EFFECTS** Urinary tract infection, urinary retention, dysuria **NOTES** Prophylactic antimicrobial therapy (excluding aminoglycosides) should be administered 1-3 days prior to, on the day of, and for 1-3 days following *Botox* administration

OnabotulinumtoxinA Drug Interactions

- Aminoglycosides and drugs affecting neuromuscular transmission can ↑ side effects.

STRESS INCONTINENCE

The medications used for stress incontinence are not FDA-approved for this use and have minimal efficacy, but there is a lack of more effective options. Pseudoephedrine, an agonist of norepinephrine and epinephrine, causes adrenaline-type effects, including tachycardia, palpitations, nervousness/anxiety, headache and insomnia. Duloxetine is commonly chosen when it is possible to treat two conditions with one drug (e.g., incontinence/depression), though it has little efficacy for incontinence (see the Depression chapter).

NOCTURIA TREATMENT

The only medication FDA-approved for the treatment of nocturia in adults is desmopressin, an antidiuretic hormone analog that temporarily decreases urine production. It is administered before bed to prevent patients from having to urinate during the night.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Desmopressin tablet *(DDAVP)* SL tablet *(Nocdurna)* Also available as a nasal spray and injection Used in diabetes insipidus, Hemophilia A and von Willebrand's disease	0.2-0.6 mg at bedtime Females: 27.7 mcg 1 hour before bedtime Males: 55.3 mcg 1 hour before bedtime	**BOXED WARNING** Severe, life-threatening hyponatremia can develop **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Patients with ↑ risk of severe hyponatremia (e.g., excessive fluid intake, illnesses or drugs that can cause fluid or electrolyte imbalances, including CKD, SIADH, loop diuretics, steroids) Patients with ↑ risk of fluid retention (e.g., uncontrolled hypertension, heart failure) **SIDE EFFECTS** Hyponatremia, headache, hypertension, xerostomia (SL tablet) **MONITORING** Serum Na (baseline, 1 week and 1 month)

KEY COUNSELING POINTS

See the Drug Formulations and Patient Counseling chapter for counseling language/layman's terminology.

ANTICHOLINERGICS

- Can cause:
  - Dry mouth.
  - Constipation.
  - Dizziness.
- Avoid mouthwashes with alcohol, and use ice chips, sugar-free candy or gum to help with dry mouth symptoms.

OXYBUTYNIN XL

- Can cause ghost tablet in stool.

OXYBUTYNIN PATCH

- Open one pouch and apply one patch to clean, dry, intact skin on the abdomen, hips or buttocks. Avoid applying the patch on your waistline, since tight clothing can rub the patch off.
- Apply a new patch twice weekly. Select a new site for each new patch (avoid reapplication to the same site within seven days).

DESMOPRESSIN

- Can cause low sodium.

Select Guidelines/References

The AUA/SUFU guideline on the diagnosis and treatment of idiopathic overactive bladder. J Urol 2024;212:11-20. https://www.auanet.org/guidelines-and-quality/guidelines/idiopathic-overactive-bladder.

SPECIAL POPULATIONS

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CHAPTER 53

ACUTE & CRITICAL CARE MEDICINE

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= Study Tip Gal = Required Formula

BACKGROUND

When a patient is sick enough to require an advanced level of care, they are assessed for risk and admitted to either the hospital general medical (acute care) unit or the critical care/intensive care unit (ICU). If their illness has a high probability of imminent or life-threatening deterioration, treatment in the ICU is needed. The goal of critical care treatment is stabilization. If the illness is not as life-threatening, treatment in a general medical (acute care) unit is acceptable. The goal of acute care treatment is to diagnose and treat the illness, and return the patient to their normal state of health.

FLUIDS

CRYSTALLOIDS VS. COLLOIDS

Intravenous (IV) fluids, used to replace fluid losses and treat various conditions, are categorized as crystalloids or colloids. Crystalloids contain various concentrations of sodium and/or dextrose that pass freely between semipermeable membranes. Most of the administered volume does not remain in the intravascular space (inside the blood vessels), but moves into the extravascular or interstitial space. Crystalloids are less costly and generally have fewer adverse reactions than colloids. Balanced solutions (e.g., Lactated Ringer's) may be preferred in certain disease states, such as sepsis, since the chloride load from a sodium chloride solution can be high enough to contribute to cellular injury, including renal damage.

Colloids are large molecules (typically protein or starch) dispersed in a solution; they primarily remain in the intravascular space and ↑ oncotic pressure. Colloids provide greater intravascular volume expansion than equal volumes of crystalloids, but are more expensive and have not shown a clear clinical benefit over crystalloids.

Many different crystalloid and colloid products are available, including combination formulations (e.g., D5NS). Dextrose-containing products contain "free water" and are used when water is needed intracellularly. Lactated Ringer's and normal saline are the most common fluids used for volume resuscitation in shock states (see the Types of Shock section). Albumin is the most commonly used colloid and is particularly useful when there is significant edema (e.g., cirrhosis); albumin should not be used for nutritional supplementation when serum albumin is low. Hydroxyethyl starch should only be used if other treatments are unavailable due to its boxed warning for mortality, renal injury and coagulopathy (bleeding).

CLASS	COMMON FLUIDS
Crystalloids	**5% Dextrose (D5W)***
	0.9% NaCl (normal saline, NS)*
	Lactated Ringer's (LR) – contains NaCl, KCl, $CaCl_2$, Na-lactate (lactate is converted to bicarbonate)
	Multiple electrolyte injection ***(Plasma-Lyte A,*** others)
Colloids	**Albumin 5%, 25% *(Albutein, AlbuRx,*** others)
	Dextran
	Hydroxyethyl starch *(Hespan**, Hextend)*

**There are various crystalloid concentrations and combinations including: D50, D5NS, D5½NS, ½NS*
***Brand discontinued but name still used in practice.*

ELECTROLYTE DISORDERS

Electrolyte abnormalities are common in hospitalized general medical and critically ill patients. There are many causes (see electrolyte sections that follow). Electrolyte abnormalities can lead to severe complications (e.g., seizures, arrhythmias, death). Electrolyte replacement protocols, used to correct deficiencies, should be followed to avoid toxicity. Electrolytes and their reference ranges are discussed in the Lab Values & Drug Monitoring chapter.

SODIUM

HYPONATREMIA

Hyponatremia (Na < 135 mEq/L) is usually not symptomatic until the sodium is < 120 mEq/L, unless the level falls rapidly (e.g., acute hyponatremia). Symptoms can result from cerebral edema and high intracranial pressure, and range from mild-moderate (e.g., headache, confusion, lethargy, gait disturbances) to severe (e.g., seizures, coma, respiratory arrest).

Hyponatremia is classified according to serum osmolality and volume status:

- Hypotonic hypervolemic hyponatremia is caused by fluid overload (e.g., cirrhosis, heart failure, renal failure). Diuresis with fluid restriction is the preferred treatment.
- Hypotonic isovolemic (euvolemic) hyponatremia can be caused by the syndrome of inappropriate antidiuretic hormone (SIADH). Treatment includes diuresis, restricting fluids and stopping drugs that can induce SIADH. Demeclocycline can be used off-label for SIADH.
- Hypotonic hypovolemic hyponatremia can be due to diuretics, salt-wasting syndromes, adrenal insufficiency, blood loss or vomiting/diarrhea. The treatment is to correct underlying causes and stop intake of hypotonic solutions; IV hypertonic (3%) saline can be used in patients with severe symptoms or Na < 120 mEq/L (see correction goals and risks below).

Hyponatremia should not be corrected too quickly (a typical goal is 4 – 8 mEq/L per 24 hours). Correcting sodium more rapidly than 12 mEq/L per 24 hours can cause osmotic demyelination syndrome (ODS) or central pontine myelinolysis, which can cause paralysis, seizures and death. Desmopressin can reduce water diuresis and avoid overcorrection.

The arginine vasopressin (AVP) receptor antagonists (conivaptan and tolvaptan) can be used to treat SIADH and hypervolemic hyponatremia. They increase excretion of free water while maintaining sodium. They are more expensive than 3% saline and use beyond 30 days with the oral product, tolvaptan, is not recommended.

ARGININE VASOPRESSIN RECEPTOR ANTAGONISTS

DRUG	DOSE	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Conivaptan *(Vaprisol)* Injection Dual AVP antagonist [vasopressin 1A (V1A) and 2 (V2)]	LD: 20 mg IV over 30 minutes MD: 20 mg continuous IV infusion over 24 hrs; can ↑ to 40 mg daily if Na does not ↑ at desired rate; do not use > 4 days CrCl < 30 mL/min: avoid ↓ dose in moderate and severe hepatic impairment	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Hypovolemic hyponatremia, concurrent use with strong CYP450 3A4 inhibitors, anuria **WARNING** Overly rapid correction of hyponatremia (> 12 mEq/L/24 hours) is associated with ODS (life-threatening) **SIDE EFFECTS** Orthostatic hypotension, fever, hypokalemia, infusion site reaction **MONITORING** Rate of Na increase, BP, volume status, urine output

DRUG	DOSE	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Tolvaptan *(Samsca, Jynarque)* Tablet Selective AVP antagonist (V2 only)	15 mg PO daily; max 60 mg daily; limit to ≤ 30 days due to hepatotoxicity CrCl < 10 mL/min: avoid Avoid fluid restriction in the first 24 hours of therapy	**BOXED WARNINGS** Should be initiated and re-initiated in a hospital with close monitoring of serum Na Overly rapid correction of hyponatremia (> 12 mEq/L/24 hours) is associated with ODS (life-threatening); consider slower correction with severe malnutrition, alcoholism or advanced liver disease **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Patients who are unable to sense or respond appropriately to thirst, urgent need to raise Na, hypovolemic hyponatremia, use with strong CYP3A4 inhibitors, anuria **WARNINGS** Hepatotoxicity (avoid use > 30 days and in liver disease/cirrhosis) **SIDE EFFECTS** Thirst, nausea, dry mouth, polyuria, weakness, hyperglycemia, hypernatremia **MONITORING** Rate of Na increase, BP, volume status, urine output, signs of drug-induced hepatotoxicity

LD = loading dose, MD = maintenance dose

HYPERNATREMIA

Hypernatremia (Na > 145 mEq/L) is associated with a water deficit and hypertonicity.

- Hypovolemic hypernatremia is caused by dehydration, vomiting or diarrhea and is treated with fluids.
- Hypervolemic hypernatremia is caused by intake of hypertonic fluids and is treated with diuresis.
- Isovolemic (euvolemic) hypernatremia is frequently caused by diabetes insipidus (DI), which is a lack of antidiuretic hormone (ADH). It is treated with desmopressin.

POTASSIUM

Hyperkalemia is often due to chronic kidney disease, discussed in the Renal Disease chapter. This section discusses hypokalemia.

Hypokalemia, or potassium (K) < 3.5 mEq/L, is common in hospitalized patients. In general, a drop of 1 mEq/L in serum K below 3.5 mEq/L represents a total body deficit of 100 – 400 mEq. Management includes treating the underlying cause [e.g., metabolic alkalosis, overdiuresis, drugs (such as amphotericin, insulin)] and administering oral or IV potassium. The oral route is preferred for potassium replacement when feasible. Oral potassium salt formulations are reviewed in the Chronic Heart Failure chapter. Some hospitals use potassium sliding scales that allow a healthcare provider (usually a nurse) to administer a certain dose of potassium based on the serum potassium level in patients with normal kidney function (see example protocol to the right).

EXAMPLE POTASSIUM REPLACEMENT PROTOCOL

Step 1: check phosphate level. If > 2.5 mg/dL, proceed to step 2. If ≤ 2.5 mg/dL, use separate potassium phosphate replacement protocol.

Step 2: provide replacement doses as follows.

SERUM POTASSIUM (MEQ/L)	INSTRUCTION
< 2.6	100 mEq KCl IV; contact MD
2.6-2.9	80 mEq KCl IV; contact MD
3.0-3.2	60 mEq KCl PO/IV
3.3-3.5	40 mEq KCl PO/IV

Step 3: order follow-up labs. For K < 3.2 mEq/L, recheck immediately and with AM labs.
For K ≥ 3.2 mEq/L, recheck with AM labs only.

Safe recommendations for administration of IV potassium through a peripheral line include a maximum infusion rate ≤ 10 mEq/hr and a maximum concentration of 10 mEq/100 mL. More rapid infusions and higher concentrations may be warranted in severe or symptomatic hypokalemia; these require a central line and cardiac monitoring. IV potassium can be fatal if administered undiluted or via IV push.

Magnesium is necessary for potassium uptake; hypomagnesemia can worsen or prevent correction of hypokalemia. Magnesium should be replaced first if both hypokalemia and hypomagnesemia are present.

MAGNESIUM

Hypomagnesemia, or magnesium (Mg) < 1.3 mEq/L, is more common than hypermagnesemia, which is most often due to renal insufficiency. Common causes of hypomagnesemia include chronic alcohol use, diuretics, amphotericin B, vomiting and diarrhea. When serum Mg is < 1 mEq/L with life-threatening symptoms (e.g., seizures, arrhythmias), IV magnesium sulfate replacement is recommended. When Mg is < 1 mEq/L without life-threatening symptoms, therapy can be administered IV or IM. When Mg is > 1 mEq/L and < 1.5 mEq/L, magnesium is replaced orally, often with magnesium oxide. Magnesium replacement regimens should continue for 5 days to fully replace body stores.

PHOSPHORUS

Hyperphosphatemia is often due to chronic kidney disease, and is discussed in the Renal Disease chapter. This section discusses hypophosphatemia.

Hypophosphatemia is considered severe and is usually symptomatic when serum phosphate (PO4) is < 1 mg/dL. Symptoms include muscle weakness and respiratory failure. It can be caused by phosphate-binding drugs (e.g., calcium salts, sevelamer), chronic alcohol intake and hyperparathyroidism. When PO4 is < 1 mg/dL, IV phosphorus is used for replacement, such as 0.08 – 0.16 mmol/kg in 500 mL of NS or D5W over 6 hours. Patients must be carefully monitored and additional doses may be necessary. Patients with hypophosphatemia often have hypokalemia and hypomagnesemia that will require correction. Less severe hypophosphatemia can be treated orally and full replacement often takes one week or longer.

OTHER TREATMENTS IN HOSPITALIZED PATIENTS

VTE PROPHYLAXIS

People in the hospital often have limited mobility and other risk factors for developing a venous thromboembolism (VTE). For this reason, the need for VTE prophylaxis should be evaluated in all inpatients. Refer to the Anticoagulation chapter for a discussion on VTE prophylaxis options.

INCENTIVE SPIROMETRY

Incentive spirometry is a technique used to facilitate lung expansion in patients with atelectasis (i.e., completely or partially collapsed lung with reduced lung volume). Atelectasis is a common complication in hospitalized patients, especially post-operatively, and can lead to retained airway secretions, dyspnea, hypoxemia and other pulmonary complications (e.g., pneumonia). An incentive spirometer is a device that facilitates deep breathing with a visual indicator that provides feedback on breathing quality; deep breathing, along with other interventions (e.g., head of bed elevation, coughing, ambulation), opens alveoli and clears secretions.

INTRAVENOUS IMMUNOGLOBULIN

Intravenous immune globulin (IVIG or IGIV) contains pooled immunoglobulin (IgG) from the plasma of a thousand or more blood donors (this is the FDA's minimum; typically IVIG is derived from 3,000 – 10,000 donors). IVIG is given as plasma protein replacement therapy for immune-deficient patients who have decreased or abolished antibody production capabilities. Initially, IVIG was used only for immunodeficiency conditions. Currently, IVIG has several FDA-approved indications and is used for a variety of off-label indications (e.g., multiple sclerosis, myasthenia gravis, Guillain-Barré syndrome) with varying results. IVIG treatment can impair the response to vaccination (refer to the Immunizations chapter for a discussion on the timing of vaccinations and antibody-containing products).

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Intravenous immunoglobulin *(Gammagard, Gamunex-C, Octagam, Privigen,* others)	Indication and product specific IBW or AdjBW is usually used to calculate the dose Use a slower infusion rate in renal and CV disease Do not freeze, shake or heat	**BOXED WARNINGS** Acute renal dysfunction can occur (rare) and has been associated with fatalities; it usually occurs within 7 days (more likely with products stabilized with sucrose); use caution in the elderly, those with renal disease, diabetes, volume depletion, sepsis, paraproteinemia or taking nephrotoxic medications Thrombosis can occur even without risk factors; for patients at risk, administer the minimum dose **CONTRAINDICATIONS** IgA deficiency (use the product with the lowest amount of IgA) **WARNINGS** Use with caution in CV disease (use isotonic products and a lower infusion rate) **SIDE EFFECTS** Headache, nausea, diarrhea, injection site reaction, infusion reaction (facial flushing, chest tightness, fever, chills, hypotension – slow/stop infusion), renal failure or blood dyscrasias (both rare) **MONITORING** Renal function, urine output, volume status, Hgb **NOTES** Patients should be asked about past IVIG infusions, including product used and any reactions that occurred; a slower titration and premedication may be needed Lot numbers of administered IVIG products must be tracked (it is a blood product)

CRITICAL CARE

For life-threatening injuries or illnesses that require specialized care, treatment is often initiated pre-hospital or in an emergency department and continued in the ICU. Large hospitals have specialized ICUs for different types of care (e.g., medical, surgical, cardiovascular, trauma, pediatric, neonatal). Many medications in the ICU are administered IV with an infusion pump, which bypasses gut/absorption issues and allows for a rapid onset of effect, easy titration and continuous administration. Often, a central line is used; this is especially important with vesicants and IV solutions that can contribute to phlebitis.

The ICU mortality rate in the U.S. is ~15%. The Acute Physiologic Assessment and Chronic Health Evaluation II (APACHE II) is a scoring tool used to determine prognosis and estimate ICU mortality risk. Conditions that commonly require ICU care are addressed in the rest of this chapter.

ICU MEDICATIONS THAT TARGET THE SYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM

VASOPRESSORS

Most vasopressors work by stimulating alpha receptors; this causes peripheral vasoconstriction (think "pressing down on the vasculature") and increases systemic vascular resistance (SVR), which increases blood pressure (BP). Vasopressors that stimulate beta receptors can increase heart rate (HR) and cardiac output (CO). Phenylephrine is a pure alpha-agonist that increases SVR without increasing HR. Epinephrine and norepinephrine are mixed alpha- and beta-agonists, causing an increase in SVR, CO and HR. Dopamine is a natural precursor of norepinephrine and has dose-dependent receptor effects (see Study Tip Gal).

DOPAMINE DOSING

Dopamine stimulates different receptors depending on the dose.

- Low dose: 1-4 mcg/kg/min
  - Dopamine-1 agonist
- Medium dose: 5-10 mcg/kg/min
  - Beta-1 agonist
- High dose: 10-20 mcg/kg/min
  - Alpha-1 agonist

Vasopressin and angiotensin II increase SVR by unique mechanisms. Vasopressin acts directly on vasopressin receptors. Angiotensin II *(Giapreza)* raises blood pressure by vasoconstriction and aldosterone release, which results in sodium and water retention; due to a lack of robust evidence and clinical experience, it is not a first-line agent. Angiotensin II, a hormone in the renin-angiotensin-aldosterone system, is discussed in detail in the Hypertension chapter. A review of the nervous system and receptor pharmacology can be found in the Basic Science Concepts chapter.

DRUG	MOA	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Dopamine	Dose-dependent, see Study Tip Gal	**BOXED WARNING** Dopamine and norepinephrine have a boxed warning regarding extravasation; all vasopressors are vesicants when administered IV; treat extravasation with phentolamine **WARNINGS** Use extreme caution in patients taking an MAO inhibitor; prolonged hypertension may result (dopamine, epinephrine and norepinephrine) **SIDE EFFECTS** Arrhythmias, tachycardia (especially dopamine, epinephrine), necrosis (gangrene), bradycardia (phenylephrine), hyperglycemia (epinephrine), tachyphylaxis, peripheral and gut ischemia **MONITORING** Continuous BP monitoring (with continuous infusions), HR, mean arterial pressure (MAP), ECG, urine output, infusion site for extravasation **NOTES** Solutions should not be used if they are discolored or contain a precipitate All vasopressors are Y-site compatible with each other (except angiotensin II) Can be dosed non-weight-based (mcg/min) or weight-based (mcg/kg/min) Vasopressors should most often be administered via central IV line There is no clear evidence that low (renal) dose dopamine provides benefit Epinephrine used for IV push is 0.1 mg/mL (1:10,000 ratio strength); epinephrine used for IM injection or compounding IV products is 1 mg/mL (1:1,000 ratio strength); ratio strength has been removed from labeling per the FDA
Epinephrine ***(Adrenalin)*** ***EpiPen,*** others – for anaphylaxis	Alpha-1, beta-1, beta-2 agonist	
Norepinephrine ***(Levophed)***	Alpha-1 agonist activity > beta-1 agonist activity	
Phenylephrine	Alpha-1 agonist	
Vasopressin *(Vasostrict)* Also known as arginine vasopressin (AVP) and antidiuretic hormone (ADH)	Vasopressin receptor agonist Vasoconstrictor, no inotropic or chronotropic effects	

EXTRAVASATION

Many drugs used in the ICU, including vasopressors, are vesicants that cause severe tissue damage/necrosis with extravasation (leakage of drug from the blood vessel into the surrounding tissue). This is a medical emergency. To reduce the risk, every attempt should be made to infuse vasopressors through a central line. Vasopressor extravasation should be treated with phentolamine, an alpha-1 blocker that antagonizes the effects of the vasopressor. If extravasation occurs with norepinephrine, epinephrine or phenylephrine, stop the infusion but do not disconnect the needle/cannula and do not flush the line; instead, gently aspirate (remove) the drug. Nitroglycerin ointment can be used topically as an alternative if phentolamine is unavailable.

VASODILATORS

Vasodilators administered by continuous IV infusion include nitroglycerin (NTG) and nitroprusside. Frequent or continuous BP monitoring is required when using IV vasodilators, and doses must be decreased if there is hypotension or worsening renal function. NTG is often used when there is active myocardial ischemia or uncontrolled hypertension, but effectiveness may be limited to 24 – 48 hours due to tachyphylaxis (tolerance).

Nitroprusside is a mixed (equal) arterial and venous vasodilator at all doses. It has a greater effect on BP than NTG. It should not be used in active myocardial ischemia because it can cause blood to be diverted away from the diseased coronary arteries ("coronary steal"). The metabolism of nitroprusside results in thiocyanate and cyanide formation, which can cause toxicity in patients with renal or hepatic insufficiency, respectively. Hydroxocobalamin can be administered to reduce the risk of thiocyanate toxicity or to treat cyanide toxicity. Sodium thiosulfate + sodium nitrite *(Nithiodote)* is used for cyanide toxicity (see the Toxicology & Antidotes chapter).

DRUG	MOA	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Nitroglycerin See the Stable Ischemic Heart Disease chapter for other formulations	Low doses: venous vasodilator High doses: arterial vasodilator	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** SBP < 90 mmHg, use with PDE-5 inhibitors or riociguat **WARNINGS** Severe hypotension and ↑ intracranial pressure (ICP) **SIDE EFFECTS** Headache, tachycardia, tachyphylaxis (within 24-48 hours of continuous administration), lightheadedness **MONITORING** BP, HR **NOTES** Requires a non-PVC container (e.g., glass, polyolefin); use administration sets (tubing) intended for NTG
Nitroprusside *(Nipride)*	Mixed (equal) arterial and venous vasodilator	**BOXED WARNINGS** Metabolism produces cyanide (use the lowest dose for the shortest duration necessary), excessive hypotension (continuous BP monitoring required), not for direct injection (must be further diluted; D5W preferred) **WARNINGS** ↑ ICP **SIDE EFFECTS** Headache, ↑ HR, thiocyanate/cyanide toxicity (risk ↑ in renal/hepatic impairment) **MONITORING** BP (continuous), HR, renal/hepatic function, urine output, s/sx of thiocyanate/cyanide toxicity, acid-base status, venous oxygen concentration **NOTES** Requires light protection during administration; use only clear solutions, a blue color indicates degradation to cyanide – do not use

INOTROPES

Intravenous inotropes increase the contractility of the heart. Dobutamine is a beta-1 agonist that increases HR and the force of myocardial contraction, which increases CO. It has weak beta-2 (vasodilation) and alpha-1 agonist activity. Milrinone is a selective phosphodiesterase-3 inhibitor in cardiac and vascular tissue. It produces inotropic effects with significant vasodilation. Dobutamine and milrinone should only be used when BP is adequate because they produce vasodilation.

DRUG	MOA	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Dobutamine	Beta-1 agonist with some beta-2 and alpha-1 agonism	**SIDE EFFECTS** Dobutamine: hyper/hypotension, ventricular arrhythmias, tachycardia, angina Milrinone: ventricular arrhythmias, hypotension **MONITORING** Continuous BP and ECG monitoring, HR, central venous pressure (CVP), MAP, urine output, LFTs and renal function (with milrinone) **NOTES** Milrinone: dose must be reduced for renal impairment Dobutamine may turn slightly pink due to oxidation, but potency is not lost Dobutamine and milrinone are often referred to as "inodilators" Risk of hypotension; use for inotropic effect only if adequate perfusion
Milrinone	Phosphodiesterase-3 (PDE-3) inhibitor	

TYPES OF SHOCK

Shock is a common emergency in ICU patients. It is characterized by hypoperfusion, usually in the setting of hypotension, defined as SBP < 90 mmHg or MAP < 70 mmHg. There are four main types of shock:

- Hypovolemic (e.g., hemorrhagic)
- Distributive (e.g., septic, anaphylactic)
- Cardiogenic (e.g., post-myocardial infarction)
- Obstructive (e.g., massive pulmonary embolism)

The diagnosis of shock is based on hemodynamic parameters; more than one type of shock can occur at the same time. Drugs used for shock may also be used for advanced cardiac life support (ACLS)/cardiac arrest, hypotension during surgery/anesthesia and acute decompensated heart failure (ADHF).

HYPOVOLEMIC SHOCK

To treat hypovolemic shock, restore intravascular volume. Fluid resuscitation with crystalloids is generally recommended first-line for hypovolemic shock that is not caused by hemorrhage. Blood products (e.g., packed red blood cells, fresh frozen plasma) should be administered in hypovolemic shock due to bleeding. If the patient does not respond to the initial crystalloid or blood product therapy ("fluid challenge"), then vasopressors may be indicated. Vasopressors are not effective unless the intravascular volume is adequate.

DISTRIBUTIVE SHOCK

Distributive shock is characterized by low SVR, and initially high CO followed by low or normal CO. Septic, anaphylactic and neurogenic shock are examples of distributive shock.

SEPSIS AND SEPTIC SHOCK

Sepsis is defined as life-threatening organ dysfunction caused by a dysregulated host response to infection (see the Study Tip Gal on the next page for common causes of ICU infections). Several screening tools, each using a different combination of criteria (e.g., tachypnea, tachycardia, hypotension, fever, decreased mental status), are available to evaluate for sepsis and infection-induced organ dysfunction. Tools such as the National Early Warning Score (NEWS) and systemic inflammatory response syndrome (SIRS) criteria are recommended over the quick Sequential Organ Failure Assessment (qSOFA).

GENERAL PRINCIPLES FOR TREATING SEPTIC SHOCK

Target a mean arterial pressure (MAP) of ≥ 65 mmHg

MAP = [(2 x DBP) + SBP]/3

FILL THE TANK
Optimize preload with IV crystalloids (balanced fluids such as Lactated Ringer's preferred)

SQUEEZE THE PIPE AND KICK THE PUMP
Alpha-1 agonist activity (peripheral vasoconstriction) to ↑ SVR

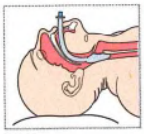
Beta-1 agonist activity to ↑ myocardial contractility and cardiac output

TWO COMMON CAUSES OF ICU INFECTIONS

Mechanical ventilation: pushes air into the lungs for patients who cannot breathe on their own.
Air flows into the trachea through an endotracheal tube (ET tube) placed through the mouth or nose. This is called intubation. "Weaning" refers to the process of getting the patient off the ventilator when they are ready to breathe on their own again.

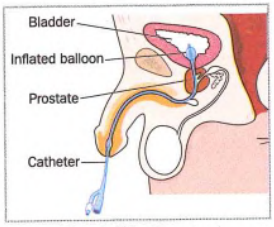
↑ time on ventilator = ↑ risk of infection, including lung infections

Pseudomonas (and other organisms) thrive in the moist air in the ventilator.



Indwelling urinary catheter.
Intubated patients have an indwelling catheter that is inserted into the bladder to drain urine. Foley catheters are the most common type.

↑ time with Foley catheter = ↑ risk of bladder infection



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Septic shock is sepsis with persistent hypotension requiring a vasopressor to maintain MAP ≥ 65 mmHg and lactate ≥ 2 mmol/L, despite fluid resuscitation.

The Surviving Sepsis Campaign is an initiative that prompts the use of selected evidence-based interventions (called "bundles") to reduce mortality from sepsis and septic shock. These bundles include early administration of broad-spectrum antibiotics and fluid resuscitation with IV crystalloids. If adequate perfusion cannot be maintained with IV crystalloids, vasopressors are used. Norepinephrine is the vasopressor of choice in septic shock. Vasopressin is commonly used in addition to norepinephrine.

ACUTE DECOMPENSATED HEART FAILURE AND CARDIOGENIC SHOCK

Patients with heart failure may experience episodes of worsening symptoms, such as sudden weight gain, an inability to lie flat without becoming short of breath, decreasing functionality (e.g., unable to perform their daily routine), increasing shortness of breath and fatigue. This is called acute decompensated heart failure (ADHF); when hypotension and hypoperfusion are also present, it is called cardiogenic shock.

CLINICAL PRESENTATION AND ASSESSMENT

ADHF is caused by worsening HF, a cardiac event (e.g., MI, arrhythmia, valvular disease, uncontrolled hypertension) or a non-cardiac cause (e.g., non-adherence with medications or dietary restrictions, worsening renal function, infection, illicit drug use). Negative inotropes (e.g., non-DHP CCBs), drugs that cause fluid retention (e.g., NSAIDs) and cardiotoxic drugs can cause/exacerbate HF.

ADHF presents with volume overload, hypoperfusion or both. Some patients require invasive monitoring with a catheter that is guided through the right side of the heart into the pulmonary artery, called a Swan-Ganz or pulmonary artery catheter. The catheter provides hemodynamic measurements of congestion (pulmonary capillary wedge pressure, or PCWP), hypoperfusion (cardiac output) and other measurements (e.g., SVR, CVP) useful for guiding treatment. Treatment of ADHF consists of diuretics, inotropes and vasodilators, depending on the symptoms (see the Study Tip Gal on next page). Beta-blockers should only be stopped in ADHF if hypotension or hypoperfusion is present.

TREATING VOLUME OVERLOAD

ADHF most commonly presents with volume overload. Volume overload is treated with diuretics and possibly IV vasodilators. Loop diuretics are initially given IV since volume overload also affects the vessels of the gut and can decrease oral drug absorption. If diuretic resistance develops, the dose can be increased or a thiazide-type diuretic (e.g., metolazone, chlorothiazide) can be added to the loop diuretic.

TREATING HYPOPERFUSION

The most common cause of cardiogenic shock is an MI, with resulting failure of the left ventricle. Cardiogenic shock requires treatment with vasopressors and/or inotropes. The vasodilatory and inotropic properties of dobutamine and milrinone make them uniquely suited to treat ADHF in patients with adequate BP and symptoms of both congestion and hypoperfusion. If BP is inadequate, inotropes will often be used in combination with vasopressors.

TREATING ADHF

Patients with edema (pulmonary or lower extremity), jugular venous distention and/or ascites are **VOLUME OVERLOADED**; treatment options include:

- Loop diuretics
- Vasodilators can be added (NTG, nitroprusside)

Patients with ↓ renal function, altered mental status and/or cool extremities have **HYPOPERFUSION***; treatment options include:

- Inotropes (dobutamine, milrinone)
- If hypotensive, consider adding a vasopressor (dopamine, norepinephrine, phenylephrine)

Some patients experience both **VOLUME OVERLOAD** and **HYPOPERFUSION**; treatment options include:

- A combination of agents above

**Avoid vasodilators; these can ↓ BP and worsen hypoperfusion*

OTHER COMMON ICU CONDITIONS

PAIN

IV opioids (e.g., morphine, hydromorphone, fentanyl) are first-line for analgesia in the ICU (see the Pain chapter). The pharmacokinetic properties of the drug and the renal/hepatic function of the patient will dictate the drug choice because all IV opioids exhibit similar analgesic efficacy. Adjuvants (e.g., acetaminophen, NSAIDs) may be appropriate depending on the type of pain. Pain should be assessed at rest with a validated pain scale at least every 2 – 4 hours in the ICU. Analgesia-based sedation or "analgosedation" is a sedation strategy that uses analgesia first to relieve pain and discomfort, which are the primary causes of agitation. Compared to benzodiazepines, analgosedation is associated with less time on the ventilator and shorter ICU length of stay (LOS).

AGITATION

Sedation is necessary for some ICU patients to maintain synchronized breathing with the ventilator (prevent "bucking" the ventilator) and to limit suffering in the harsh ICU environment. Agitation is managed with benzodiazepines (lorazepam, midazolam) and/or non-benzodiazepine hypnotics (propofol, dexmedetomidine). Non-benzodiazepines are preferred and associated with improved ICU outcomes, shorter mechanical ventilation duration and shorter LOS. Dexmedetomidine is the only sedative approved for use in intubated and non-intubated patients. Benzodiazepines have an important role in sedation in the presence of seizures or alcohol/benzodiazepine withdrawal; they are discussed in the Anxiety chapter.

Validated sedation scales allow for titration to light sedation (preferred) or deep sedation. Sedated patients should be monitored every 2 – 3 hours to make sure they are receiving the least amount of drug to keep them calm. Common sedation scales include the Richmond Agitation Sedation Scale (RASS – see below), the Ramsay Agitation Scale (RAS) and the Riker Sedation-Agitation Scale (SAS). The Glasgow Coma Scale is used to determine the level of consciousness (often after traumatic brain injury). Daily interruptions ("sedation vacations") of continuous sedative infusions are used to assess readiness to wean off/stop the sedative as soon as possible.

RICHMOND AGITATION AND SEDATION SCALE (RASS)

SCORE	TERM	DESCRIPTION
+4	Combative	Overtly combative, violent, immediate danger to staff
+3	Very agitated	Pulls or removes tube(s) or catheter(s); aggressive
+2	Agitated	Frequent, non-purposeful movement, fights ventilator
+1	Restless	Anxious, but movements not aggressive or vigorous
0	Alert and calm	
−1	Drowsy	Not fully alert, but has sustained awakening (eye opening/eye contact) to voice (≥ 10 seconds)
−2	Light sedation	Briefly awakens with eye contact to voice (< 10 seconds)
−3	Moderate sedation	Movement or eye opening to voice (but no eye contact)
−4	Deep sedation	No response to voice, but movement or eye opening to physical stimulation
−5	Unarousable	No response to voice or physical stimulation

DELIRIUM

Delirium affects up to 80% of ventilated patients and is associated with ↑ mortality and LOS. Early mobilization and control of the patient's environment (light, noise, stimuli) are recommended to decrease delirium incidence, but no medications are recommended for prevention. Providing sedation with non-benzodiazepines may reduce the incidence of delirium and/or shorten the duration in patients who already have it. There is little evidence to support the use of haloperidol for treatment of ICU delirium, although this is common in practice. Atypical antipsychotics, primarily quetiapine, which is mildly sedating and has little risk for movement disorders, can be useful (see the Schizophrenia/Psychosis chapter).

DRUG	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Pain/Analgesia	
Fentanyl *(Sublimaze)*	See the Pain chapter for additional information
Hydromorphone *(Dilaudid)*	In critical care patients, monitor BP, HR, respiration, pain and sedation
Morphine *(Infumorph, Duramorph)*	Fentanyl: less hypotension (no histamine release) than morphine; 100x more potent than morphine; rapid onset and short duration of action (half-life increases with duration of infusion); can accumulate in hepatic impairment; CYP3A4 substrate and potential for numerous drug interactions
Remifentanil *(Ultiva)*	Hydromorphone: very potent, dose carefully
Oliceridine *(Olinvyk)*	
Agitation/Sedation	
Dexmedetomidine *(Precedex)* Alpha-2 adrenergic agonist *Igalmi* – sublingual film indicated for agitation associated with schizophrenia or bipolar disorder	**WARNINGS** Use with caution in patients with hepatic impairment, diabetes, heart block, bradycardia, severe ventricular dysfunction, hypovolemia or chronic hypertension **SIDE EFFECTS** Hypo/hypertension, bradycardia, dry mouth, nausea, constipation **MONITORING** BP, HR, sedation scale **NOTES** Does not require refrigeration Duration of infusion should not exceed 24 hours per FDA labeling Used for sedation in intubated and non-intubated patients; patients are arousable and alert when stimulated (less respiratory depression than other sedatives)
Propofol *(Diprivan)* Short-acting general anesthetic	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Hypersensitivity to egg, egg product, soy or soy product **SIDE EFFECTS** Hypotension, apnea, hypertriglyceridemia, green urine/hair/nail beds, propofol-related infusion syndrome (PRIS – rare, but can be fatal), myoclonus, pancreatitis, pain on injection (particularly peripheral vein), QT prolongation **MONITORING** BP, HR, RR, sedation scale, triglycerides (if administered > 2 days), signs of pancreatitis **NOTES** Shake well before use; do not use if there is separation of phases in the emulsion Use strict aseptic technique due to potential for bacterial growth; discard vial and tubing within 12 hours of use If transferred to a syringe prior to administration, must discard syringe within 6 hours Do not use a filter < 5 microns for administration; does not require refrigeration Oil-in-water emulsion (opaque, white solution); provides 1.1 kcal/mL

DRUG	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Lorazepam *(Ativan, Lorazepam Intensol)* Benzodiazepine	**NOTES** Injection is formulated in propylene glycol; total daily dose as low as 1 mg/kg/day can cause propylene glycol toxicity (acute renal failure and metabolic acidosis) In critical care patients, monitor BP, HR, RR, sedation scale, s/sx of propylene glycol toxicity (BUN, SCr, lactate, anion gap) if receiving continuous infusion; limit use for delirium See the Anxiety chapter for additional information
Midazolam *(Nayzilam)* Benzodiazepine Used specifically in acute care settings	**BOXED WARNINGS** Respiratory depression, respiratory arrest, apnea; start at lower end of dosing range in debilitated patients and elderly; do not administer by rapid IV injection in neonates **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Intrathecal or epidural administration (benzyl alcohol in formulation), acute narrow-angle glaucoma, do not use with potent CYP3A4 inhibitors **SIDE EFFECTS** Hypotension **MONITORING** BP, HR, RR, sedation scale **NOTES** Shorter acting than lorazepam if normal organ function (no renal/hepatic impairment or HF) Can accumulate in obese patient (highly lipophilic) and renal impairment (active metabolite) – caution with continuous infusion
Etomidate *(Amidate)* Nonbarbiturate hypnotic Ultra short-acting; used as an induction agent for intubation	**WARNING** Inhibits 11-B-hydroxylase which can lead to ↓ cortisol production for up to 24 hours **MONITORING** S/sx of adrenal insufficiency (hypotension, hyperkalemia), respiratory status, BP, HR, infusion site, sedation scale
Ketamine *(Ketalar)* NMDA receptor antagonist Used as an induction agent for intubation; used off-label for continuous sedation, pain, other indications	**WARNINGS** Emergence reactions (vivid dreams, hallucinations, delirium), cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) pressure elevation, respiratory depression/apnea, dependence/tolerance **MONITORING** BP, HR, respiratory status, emergence reactions, sedation scale **NOTES** Pretreatment with benzodiazepine can ↓ incidence of emergence reactions (see Warnings)
Delirium	
Haloperidol	See the Schizophrenia/Psychosis chapter Commonly used, but not recommended for treatment of delirium in current guidelines
Quetiapine *(Seroquel)*	See the Schizophrenia/Psychosis chapter May decrease duration of delirium

STRESS ULCERS

In patients with critical illness, blood flow is diverted to the body's major organs and there is reduced blood flow to the gut. This results in a breakdown of gastric mucosal defense mechanisms, including prostaglandin synthesis, bicarbonate production and cell turnover, which can lead to stress ulcers.

RISK FACTORS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF STRESS ULCERS

- Mechanical ventilation > 48 hrs
- Coagulopathy
- Sepsis
- Traumatic brain injury
- Major burns
- Acute renal failure
- High dose systemic steroids

Histamine-2 receptor antagonists (H2RAs) and proton pump inhibitors (PPIs) are recommended to prevent stress-related mucosal damage in patients with risk factors (see box). H2RAs can cause thrombocytopenia and mental status changes in the elderly or those with renal impairment. Tachyphylaxis has also been reported. PPIs are associated with an increased risk of GI infections *(C. difficile)*, fractures and nosocomial pneumonia. These drugs are discussed further in the Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD) & Peptic Ulcer Disease (PUD) chapter.

ADDITIONAL DRUGS USED IN THE ICU AND OPERATING ROOM

ANESTHETICS

Anesthetics are used for various effects, including to numb an area (local anesthesia), block pain (regional anesthesia) or cause a reversible loss of consciousness during surgery (general anesthesia). Anesthetics can be given via several routes of administration: topical, inhaled, intravenous, epidural or spinal.

COMMONLY USED ANESTHETICS

LOCAL

- Lidocaine *(Xylocaine)*, benzocaine, liposomal bupivacaine *(Exparel)*

INHALED

- Desflurane *(Suprane)*, sevoflurane *(Ultane)*, isoflurane *(Forane)*, nitrous oxide

INJECTABLE

- Bupivacaine *(Marcaine, Sensorcaine)*, lidocaine *(Xylocaine)*, ropivacaine *(Naropin)*

Increasingly, anesthetics are being used with opioids to reduce the opioid requirement for pain control. They work by decreasing the neuronal permeability to sodium ions, which blocks the initiation and conduction of nerve impulses. Most patients receiving anesthetics must have vital signs (especially respiration) continuously monitored. The main side effects of anesthetics include hypotension, bradycardia, nausea, vomiting and a mild drop in body temperature that can cause shivering. Overdose can cause respiratory depression. Allergic reactions are possible, and though rare, inhaled anesthetics can cause malignant hyperthermia.

It is important to verify use of the correct anesthetic product, concentration and route of administration. Bupivacaine, commonly used in epidurals, can be fatal if administered intravenously. Lidocaine should not be given by dual routes of administration (e.g., IV and topical). Lidocaine/epinephrine combination products are used for some local procedures that require an anesthetic, such as inserting a central IV line. The epinephrine is added for vasoconstriction, which keeps the lidocaine localized to the area where the numbing is needed. Deaths have occurred due to mix-ups with epinephrine products and lidocaine/epinephrine products.

NEUROMUSCULAR BLOCKING AGENTS

Patients can require the use of a neuromuscular blocking agent (NMBA) in surgery conducted under general anesthesia, to facilitate mechanical ventilation, to treat muscle spasms (tetany) or to prevent shivering when undergoing therapeutic hypothermia after cardiac arrest. The use of NMBAs is typically recommended when other methods have proven ineffective; they are not routinely used in all critically ill patients. NMBAs cause paralysis of the skeletal muscle, including those used for respiration (e.g., the diaphragm), therefore patients must be mechanically ventilated. Since they have no effect on pain or sedation, patients should receive adequate sedation and analgesia prior to starting an NMBA. NMBAs are considered high-risk medications by ISMP; all agents should be labeled with a colored auxiliary label stating "WARNING, PARALYZING AGENT" and care should be taken to separate NMBAs from other solutions to avoid confusion and inadvertent administration to a patient for whom it was not intended.

There are two types of NMBAs: depolarizing and non-depolarizing. Succinylcholine is the only available depolarizing agent; resembling acetylcholine (ACh), succinylcholine binds to and activates the ACh receptors and desensitizes them. It is typically reserved for intubation and is not used for continuous neuromuscular blockade. Succinylcholine has been associated with causing malignant hyperthermia (particularly when used with inhaled anesthetics). The non-depolarizing NMBAs work by binding to the ACh receptor and blocking the actions of endogenous ACh.

Patients receiving NMBAs are unable to breathe, move, blink or cough. Special care must be taken to protect the skin, lubricate the eyes and suction the airway frequently to clear secretions while NMBAs are used. Glycopyrrolate is an anticholinergic drug that can reduce secretions. Numerous medications can enhance the neuromuscular blocking activity of the NMBAs, leading to toxicity (e.g., aminoglycosides, polymyxins, calcium channel blockers, cyclosporine, inhaled anesthetics, lithium, quinidine, vancomycin). Monitoring for the appropriate depth of paralysis is recommended (see the Toxicology & Antidotes chapter for NMBA antidotes).

DRUG	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Depolarizing NMBA	
Succinylcholine *(Anectine, Quelicin)*	Short-acting, fast onset (30-60 seconds)
Non-Depolarizing NMBAs	
For all non-depolarizing NMBAs	**SIDE EFFECTS** Flushing, bradycardia, hypotension, tachyphylaxis, acute quadriplegic myopathy syndrome (long-term use) **MONITORING** Peripheral nerve stimulator to assess depth of paralysis during continuous infusions [also called train-of-four (TOF)], vital signs (BP, HR, RR)
Atracurium	Short t½; intermediate-acting; metabolized by Hofmann elimination (independent of renal and hepatic function)
Cisatracurium ***(Nimbex*)***	Short t½; intermediate-acting; metabolized by Hofmann elimination (independent of renal and hepatic function)
Pancuronium	Long-acting; can accumulate in renal or hepatic dysfunction; ↑ HR
Rocuronium	Intermediate-acting
Vecuronium	Intermediate-acting; can accumulate in renal or hepatic dysfunction

**Brand discontinued but name still used in practice.*

HEMOSTATIC AGENTS

The term hemostasis means causing bleeding to stop. Hemostatic methods include manual pressure, electrical tissue cauterization or systemic administration of blood products (transfusions) and hemostatic agents. The systemic hemostatic drugs work by inhibiting fibrinolysis or enhancing coagulation and may be beneficial in select critical care scenarios (e.g., intracerebral hemorrhage). Several factor products are available to treat hemorrhage in patients with hemophilia or rare factor deficiencies *(Feiba, Coagadex, Adynovate)*. Some hemostatic drugs (e.g., idarucizumab, andexanet alfa) have been approved as reversal agents for specific anticoagulants (see the Anticoagulation chapter).

There are many topical hemostatic agents, most of which are used surgically. These include thrombin in bandages, liquids and sprays, fibrin sealants, acrylates and others (names often include "throm": *Recothrom, Thrombin-JMI)*. A few topical hemostatics are OTC.

DRUG	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Aminocaproic acid *(Amicar)* Tablet, solution, injection	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Disseminated intravascular coagulation (without heparin); active intravascular clotting process **SIDE EFFECTS** Injection-site reactions, thrombosis **NOTES** FDA-approved for excessive bleeding associated with cardiac surgery, liver cirrhosis and urinary fibrinolysis. Do not use in patients with active clots, and do not give with factor IX complex concentrates due to ↑ risk for thrombosis.
Tranexamic acid *(Cyklokapron* - injection, *Lysteda* - tablet)	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** IV: acquired defective color vision, active intravascular clotting, subarachnoid hemorrhage Oral: previous or current thromboembolic disease, use of combination hormonal contraception **SIDE EFFECTS** Injection: vascular occlusion, thrombosis Oral: retinal clotting **NOTES** High-alert medication per ISMP Oral tranexamic acid is approved for heavy menstrual bleeding (menorrhagia). The injection is approved for bleeding with hemophilia and is often used off-label to control surgical bleeding and trauma-associated hemorrhage (e.g., traumatic brain injury).
Recombinant Factor VIIa *(NovoSeven RT,* Sevenfact) Injection	**BOXED WARNING** Risk of thrombotic events, particularly when used off-label **NOTES** FDA-approved for hemophilia and factor VII deficiency; has been used successfully off-label for patients with hemorrhage from trauma and warfarin-related bleeding events.

Select Guidelines/References

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SPECIAL POPULATIONS

CHAPTER 54

PEDIATRIC CONDITIONS

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Iron and vitamin D recommendations	Dietary Supplements, Natural & Complementary Medicine

= Study Tip Gal

BACKGROUND

Pediatric patients have unique, age-related physiologic characteristics (e.g., metabolism) that require patient-specific dosing of medications.

PEDIATRIC AGE CLASSIFICATIONS

Neonate	0 – 28 days
Infant	1 month – < 2 years
Child	2 – 11 years
Adolescent	12 – 18 years

Young children (especially infants) can become seriously ill very quickly and must be referred for medical care in certain situations (see box below). The first sign of illness is often an elevated temperature. Various methods (e.g., oral, axillary, rectal, ear, forehead) can be used to measure temperature, but rectal measurements are most accurate, especially in infants < 3 months old.

Several common pediatric conditions are covered in this chapter; the table on the previous page shows topics that are covered in other chapters.

WHEN TO SEEK MEDICAL CARE FOR A PEDIATRIC PATIENT

- Temperature ≥ 100.4°F* in patients < 3 months old
- Temperature ≥ 104°F* (or ≥ 100.4°F* for ≥ 2 days) in patients ≥ 3 months old
- Allergic reactions
- Blood in the urine or stool
- Dehydration (e.g., limited/no urine output) or unable to tolerate oral liquids
- Difficulty breathing
- Limping or unable to move an extremity
- Head injury
- Ingestions
- Seizure
- Severe rash or any rash with fever

**Taken rectally*

ROUTINE NEWBORN CARE

APGAR SCORING

A newborn's ability to adapt to extrauterine life is assessed at one and five minutes after birth with an Apgar score. The Apgar score measures performance in five categories: appearance (color), pulse (heart rate), grimace (reflex irritability, the newborn's response to stimulation), activity (muscle tone) and respiratory effort.

A score ≥ 7 indicates that the newborn is adapting well to extrauterine life and can receive routine newborn care. A score < 7 is a sign that the newborn is experiencing distress and prompt medical intervention (e.g., respiratory resuscitation) is needed.

MEDICATIONS AND SCREENING

Routine medications administered shortly after birth include intramuscular vitamin K (to prevent bleeding), ophthalmic erythromycin (to prevent conjunctivitis) and the first dose of the hepatitis B vaccine series. Other treatments may be given for select conditions, such as analgesia (if being circumcised) or phototherapy (i.e., light therapy) for jaundice.

Newborn screening tests (e.g., heel blood sample, hearing test, pulse oximetry) are conducted prior to discharge to detect congenital illnesses, such as phenylketonuria, cystic fibrosis and heart defects.

SELECT NEONATAL CONDITIONS

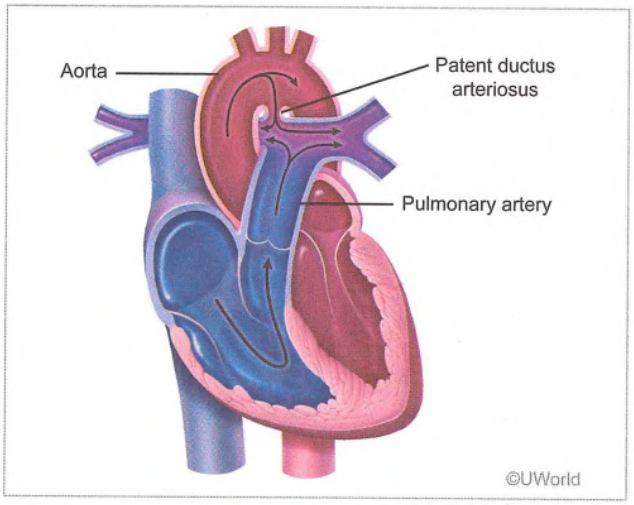
There are select conditions that present within (and are often limited to) the neonatal period (i.e., ≤ 28 days after delivery), and their likelihood can be influenced by the length of gestation (i.e., time in utero). A neonate is classified as premature if delivery occurs before 37 weeks of gestation.

Premature neonates have a higher risk of experiencing conditions such as patent ductus arteriosus (PDA) and respiratory distress syndrome (RDS). However, persistent pulmonary hypertension of the newborn (PPHN) is more often observed in term neonates (i.e., gestation ≥ 37 weeks). These conditions typically result in low Apgar scores, indicating there is an issue related to an immature pulmonary or cardiovascular system.

PATENT DUCTUS ARTERIOSUS

The ductus arteriosus is a normal opening between the aorta and pulmonary artery in an unborn fetus. It is maintained by maternal prostaglandin and allows blood (oxygenated via the placenta) to bypass the immature lungs. The ductus arteriosus should close naturally after delivery (as prostaglandin levels decrease in the neonate).

A patent ductus arteriosus (PDA), which occurs when the ductus arteriosus remains open (patent) after birth, requires medical observation and/or intervention; interventions can include surgery or drugs. NSAIDs (such as IV indomethacin or ibuprofen) can help the PDA close via their mechanism of blocking cyclooxygenase and inhibiting prostaglandin synthesis. This mechanism of NSAIDs is why they should not be used in the third trimester of pregnancy (because they can cause the PDA to close prematurely).



RESPIRATORY DISTRESS SYNDROME

A fetus begins to produce lung surfactant around week 20 of gestation and produces an adequate amount by week 35. A deficiency of surfactant production in lungs that are not fully developed causes the alveoli to collapse, which causes respiratory distress syndrome (RDS), followed by respiratory failure and death.

For this reason, most neonates born before 35 weeks of gestation will receive surfactant immediately after birth or within the first few days. Surfactant products typically have either "surf" or "actant" in their name [e.g., poractant alfa *(Curosurf)*, calfactant *(Infasurf)*].

PERSISTENT PULMONARY HYPERTENSION OF THE NEWBORN

When an infant is born, blood vessels in the lungs (which have a high resistance in utero) relax, allowing blood to begin circulating through the pulmonary vasculature. When the blood vessels fail to relax (i.e., vascular resistance remains elevated), it can lead to persistent pulmonary hypertension of the newborn (PPHN). PPHN may be linked to in utero exposure to selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs).

In addition to supportive care, inhaled nitric oxide (NO), to dilate the pulmonary vasculature, is the standard treatment. Some drugs used to treat pulmonary arterial hypertension, such as sildenafil (a PDE-5 inhibitor), can be used for PPHN.

NEONATAL SEPSIS

Any full term, previously healthy neonate (i.e., age ≤ 28 days, gestation ≥ 37 weeks) with a temperature ≥ 100.4°F (38°C) should be evaluated for bacterial infection because a delay in treatment can cause rapid progression to bacteremia, sepsis and/or meningitis, which can be fatal.

A sepsis evaluation generally involves obtaining blood and urine cultures, a lumbar puncture (to diagnose meningitis), a chest X-ray (if respiratory symptoms are present) and laboratory tests (e.g., CBC, C-reactive protein, complete metabolic panel). Signs of neonatal meningitis can include fever (or hypothermia), lethargy, poor feeding, irritability and seizures. Bulging fontanelles (swelling between the bones of the skull) occur rarely. Other classic signs of meningitis (e.g., headache, nuchal rigidity) are uncommon in neonates.

Within the first 72 hours of life, the likely bacterial pathogens causing neonatal sepsis are due to the vertical transmission of organisms from the mother to the neonate via contaminated amniotic fluid or during vaginal delivery. *Escherichia coli* is a common cause of bacteremia, while meningitis (discussed fully in the Infectious Diseases II chapter) is most often caused by Group B *Streptococcus* (GBS) and (rarely) *Listeria*. Because pregnant women may be colonized with GBS, universal GBS screening is performed during pregnancy and those who test positive receive antibiotic prophylaxis (e.g., penicillin G aqueous) during labor to decrease the risk of transmission to the neonate.

Empiric antibiotic treatment in neonates with a fever consists of ampicillin plus ceftazidime, cefepime or gentamicin. Ceftriaxone, which is commonly used in adults, is generally avoided in neonates. Ceftriaxone displaces bilirubin from albumin, which can cause bilirubin-induced brain damage (kernicterus). In addition, ceftriaxone and calcium-containing solutions can precipitate, causing an embolus and death; concurrent use of these products in neonates is contraindicated.

After the first few days of life, the bacterial cause of neonatal sepsis is typically due to environmental exposure, and antibiotic selection may differ based on patient risk factors.

SELECT PEDIATRIC CONDITIONS

BRONCHIOLITIS

Bronchiolitis is a common lower respiratory tract condition that nearly all children experience by 2 years of age. It is the most frequent cause of hospitalization in children < 6 months. Neonates and premature infants have a higher risk for severe disease, complications and death.

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) infection is responsible for the majority of bronchiolitis cases, but co-infection with other viruses (e.g., rhinovirus, human metapneumovirus) is possible in up to 30% of cases. RSV invades via the nasopharynx, enters the lower respiratory tract and causes increased mucus production and sloughing of cells that line the bronchi. This can lead to significant swelling within the airway and respiratory distress.

Bronchiolitis symptoms typically peak on days 3 – 5 of illness and include rhinitis, cough, wheezing, tachypnea and nasal flaring. Hypoxemia can occur due to mucus plugging. Apnea is a greater concern in younger infants and those with a history of prematurity.

Similar to other viral infections, the treatment is primarily supportive (suction of secretions, hydration, supplemental oxygen and fever management). Bronchodilators and systemic steroids are not used routinely. Inhaled ribavirin can be considered for immunocompromised patients with severe RSV infection.

RESPIRATORY SYNCYTIAL VIRUS INFECTION PROPHYLAXIS

The recombinant RSV vaccine (*Abrysvo*) is recommended for pregnant patients between 32 – 36 weeks gestation to prevent RSV infection in infants < 6 months old.

If the patient was not vaccinated during pregnancy, or if delivery occurred within 2 weeks of receiving the vaccine (i.e., inadequate time was available to develop and pass antibodies to the baby), RSV prophylaxis should be provided to the infant during RSV season (late fall, winter, early spring), although prophylaxis may be considered outside of this window. Two monoclonal antibodies are available for this purpose: nirsevimab (preferred) and palivizumab (recommended only if nirsevimab is not available).

DRUG	DOSING*	RECOMMENDED USE
Nirsevimab *(Beyfortus)* IM injection Prefilled syringe	Single IM dose for RSV season < 5 kg: 50 mg ≥ 5 kg: 100 mg Second RSV season: 200 mg	■ Indicated for the following patients: □ Neonates and infants ≤ 8 months old born during or entering their first RSV season □ Children ≤ 20 months who are vulnerable to severe RSV disease during their second RSV season
Palivizumab *(Synagis)* IM injection Vial	15 mg/kg IM once monthly through RSV season Maximum of 5 doses unless the season is extended Discontinue if breakthrough infection occurs requiring hospitalization	■ Recommended in the following patients (list not all-inclusive): □ Premature infant born at < 29 weeks of gestation and age ≤ 12 months □ Age ≤ 24 months with select congenital heart conditions or chronic lung disease

Doses are administered in the anterolateral thigh muscle; the deltoid can be used once the muscle mass is adequate (generally at ≥ 3 years old).

CROUP

Croup, or laryngotracheobronchitis, is usually due to a viral infection that causes significant inflammation of the upper airway, larynx and trachea. The inflammation results in the hallmark signs of inspiratory stridor (a high-pitched breathing sound), barking cough and hoarseness. Croup is most common in children < 6 years old and is often worse at night. The illness is classified and treated based on the severity of symptoms.

DRUG TREATMENT

- Systemic steroids (e.g., dexamethasone 0.6 mg/kg) are often used for mild to severe croup cases.
- In an acute care setting, a patient with difficulty breathing may be given nebulized racemic epinephrine in addition to the systemic steroid. Epinephrine is an adrenergic agonist that eases symptoms via decreased airway edema and obstruction. When administered using a nebulizer, the onset of action is fast but the duration of action is short (~2 hours) and the child should be monitored for symptom recurrence.
  - ☐ Nebulized racemic epinephrine is a 1:1 mixture of dextro (D) and levo (L) isomers (the L-isomer is the active component).
  - ☐ If racemic epinephrine is not available, L-epinephrine is used; this is half of the drug (one of the isomers) and the dose is half of the racemic formulation.
- Severe symptoms (e.g., stridor at rest, respiratory distress, severe retractions, mental status changes) can require respiratory support, such as intubation.
- Antibiotics are used only if a bacterial infection is also present.

KEY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN BRONCHIOLITIS AND CROUP

	BRONCHIOLITIS	CROUP
Cause	Viral (especially RSV)	Viral (especially parainfluenza)
Age of onset	≤ 2 years	≤ 6 years
Pathophysiology	Lower respiratory tract mucus plugging, swelling in bronchioles	Upper respiratory tract edema, inflammation in larynx
Symptoms	Nasal flaring, rhinitis, tachypnea, apnea, hypoxemia	Inspiratory stridor, barking cough, hoarseness
Treatment	Supportive care (especially suctioning of secretions and supplemental oxygen)	Dexamethasone ± racemic epinephrine

NOCTURNAL ENURESIS

Nocturnal enuresis, or bed-wetting, is a normal part of a child's development and is not generally treated before age 5 years. Boys (more often than girls) can be developing nighttime bladder control until 7 years of age.

NON-DRUG TREATMENT

Behavioral approaches should be attempted first for up to three months. These include positive reinforcement and establishing a normal daytime voiding pattern, bowel pattern and hydration pattern. Fluid intake should be limited prior to bedtime.

If behavioral methods do not result in dryness, alarm therapy can be tried. There are numerous alarms available that attach to underwear or pajamas and sound an alarm when wet. The child may sleep through the alarm, but generally stops voiding. When the alarm sounds, a caregiver should wake the child and escort them to the bathroom.

DRUG TREATMENT

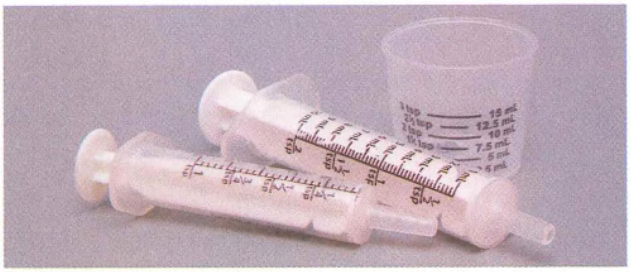
Desmopressin oral tablet is the preferred treatment for enuresis. It is a synthetic analog of antidiuretic hormone (ADH); simulating ADH will ↓ nocturnal urine production. Desmopressin can be used in combination with alarm therapy.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Desmopressin *(DDAVP)* Tablets used for enuresis Other formulations used for diabetes insipidus and hemophilia A (to control bleeding)	Start 0.2 mg PO QHS, can titrate to 0.6 mg max Contraindicated with CrCl < 50 mL/min	**BOXED WARNING** Severe, life-threatening hyponatremia can develop **SIDE EFFECTS** Headache, fatigue, possible ↓ Na due to water retention **NOTES** Limit fluid intake starting 1 hour before dose and until the next morning

PEDIATRIC SAFE MEDICATION PRACTICES

Pediatric patients have an increased risk of adverse drug events compared to the adult population; this is due to various factors that increase the risk of errors, such as age-related pharmacokinetic differences, off-label prescribing and weight-based dosing calculations.

Improved communication between caregivers and pharmacists can decrease the incidence of preventable adverse drug events. Pharmacists play an essential role in safe medication use for pediatric patients.



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Select measures that can decrease errors include:

- For liquid pediatric medications that utilize weight-based dosing (which is most), verify that the dose is appropriate for the patient's weight.
  - ☐ Transcribe the dose in milliliters only on the label.
  - ☐ Dispense the prescription with an oral measuring device (dosing syringe or cup) appropriate for the age of the patient and the dose volume, and instruct caregivers on correct use, ideally using demonstration and the teach-back counseling method.
  - ☐ Household spoons should not be used for measuring medication because they are highly variable in size and cause dosing inaccuracies.
- Counsel caregivers to store all medications in a safe, secure location.

OVER-THE-COUNTER PRODUCTS FOR CHILDREN

The FDA does not recommend OTC cough and cold medications in children < 2 years old, but most manufacturers include product labeling to avoid in children under age 4. Some combination products have additional labeling restrictions for use only in children ≥ 6 years old.

NASAL CONGESTION

Nasal congestion is very common in infants and small children and can be especially problematic if a viral illness is present. Children < 6 months old breathe mostly through their nose; they have not yet learned to breathe through their mouth. Gentle suction and intranasal saline drops or spray (e.g., *Ocean for Kids, Little Remedies*) to loosen and remove mucus is the primary treatment.

MILD PAIN AND FEVER

Aspirin and salicylate-containing products (e.g., bismuth subsalicylate) are associated with Reye's syndrome when used in children recovering from a viral infection (especially influenza and chickenpox). Because a viral infection may not be apparent in this population, these products are not recommended in patients ≤ 18 years old.

Acetaminophen infant drops and children's suspension are the same concentration to help reduce dosing errors. Use of acetaminophen in doses above the recommended amount is the most common cause of liver failure. Accidental overdose can be due to the inadvertent use of multiple acetaminophen-containing combination products; caregivers should be counseled about this danger.

Ibuprofen for pain/fever should be avoided in infants < 6 months old due to the risk of nephrotoxicity. To prevent dosing errors in patients ≥ 6 months old, caregivers should be aware that ibuprofen drops and suspension are supplied in different dosage strengths for infants and children, respectively.

In children ≥ 6 months old, acetaminophen or ibuprofen are appropriate for treating pain and fever. Some physicians may recommend giving them together in alternating doses (e.g., acetaminophen first, then ibuprofen three hours later).

SELECT OTC ANALGESICS AND ANTIPYRETICS

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Fever and/or Pain		
Acetaminophen ***(Tylenol Children's,*** *FeverAll Children's,* others)	10-15 mg/kg/dose every 4-6 hours (max 75 mg/kg/day, not to exceed 4,000 mg/day) Acetaminophen oral liquids (infants and childrens) are the same concentration: 160 mg/5 mL	For simplicity, age and weight-based dosing is on the side of the container Caution caregivers regarding incorrect dosing or overdose due to the use of multiple acetaminophen-containing products
Ibuprofen ***(Infants' Advil Drops, Motrin Infants' Drops, Children's Motrin, Children's Advil,*** others)	5-10 mg/kg/dose every 6-8 hours (max 40 mg/kg/day, not to exceed 2,400 mg/day) Infant drops: 50 mg/1.25 mL Children's suspension: 100 mg/5 mL	Indicated for infants ≥ 6 months old Can cause nausea

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CASE SCENARIO

The father of LC, a 9-month-old female, comes to a community pharmacy stating that his daughter has a rectal temperature of 102°F. The pediatrician recommended OTC treatment and the father asks for assistance with products to purchase and dosing. LC weighs 18.5 lbs.

What medications and doses would be appropriate?
Acetaminophen and ibuprofen (based on her age and no past medical history) are both appropriate and can be used together (in alternating doses).

To calculate the dose, convert LC's weight to kg: 18.5 lbs / 2.2 = 8.409 kg

Next, calculate LC's dose range for each medication.

Acetaminophen: 10-15 mg/kg/dose every 4-6 hours	Ibuprofen: 5-10 mg/kg/dose every 6-8 hours
LC's dose: 84.09-126.14 mg every 4-6 hours	LC's dose: 42.05-84.09 mg every 6-8 hours

How should the father be instructed to give these medications?
Determine a dose within the range that can easily be administered based on the products (and provided syringes) available.

Acetaminophen: 160 mg/5 mL	Ibuprofen Infant Drops: 50 mg/1.25mL
LC's dose: 120 mg (3.75 mL) every 4-6 hours	LC's dose: 75 mg (1.875 mL) every 6-8 hours

The father can alternate the two medications every 3 hours as needed, keeping at least 6 hours between doses of the same medication.

INTESTINAL GAS

Intestinal gas is a common condition that causes distress after feedings. The associated crying and fussiness generally dissipate when the child is ~6 – 8 months old and the digestive tract has grown. Simethicone drops (20 mg, 1 – 4 times daily PRN) can offer mild, if any, benefit. Simethicone is not absorbed and is safe to use.

CONSTIPATION

There are a variety of options to treat children with constipation. Product selection depends on patient age. In addition, prunes or pears (as fruit or juice) or kiwi fruit can be helpful. Any child with ongoing constipation issues should be seen by a pediatrician.

- Age < 6 months: pediatric glycerin suppositories (OTC) are often used for quick relief (off-label, the FDA-approved indication is for children ≥ 2 years).
- Age ≥ 6 months: oral polyethylene glycol 3350 *(MiraLax)* 0.2 – 1.5 g/kg/day is preferred for most cases of intermittent constipation.
- Age ≥ 2 years: additional options include magnesium hydroxide, docusate, senna and rectal enemas.
  - OTC rectal enemas [e.g., sodium phosphate *(Fleet Pedia-Lax Enema)*] should not be used in children < 2 years old due to the risk of severe dehydration and electrolyte abnormalities that could lead to serious complications (e.g., arrhythmia, acute kidney injury, death).
- Children ≥ 6 years: additional options include bisacodyl suppositories or oral mineral oil.
  - Mineral oil should be used with caution in children at risk for aspiration (e.g., neurologic impairment) or with significant reflux, nausea or vomiting; unintentional aspiration can cause respiratory distress or pneumonitis.

DIARRHEA

Dehydration can occur as a result of significant diarrhea and can be dangerous in infants. Fluid and electrolytes can be replaced with OTC oral rehydration solutions, such as *Pedialyte and Enfamil Enfalyte*. Bismuth subsalicylate should not be used due to the risk of Reye's syndrome. Loperamide is not recommended for OTC use in children ≤ 6 years old.

DRUGS TO AVOID IN PEDIATRIC PATIENTS

Contraindicated

- Neonates (age 0-28 days):
  - Ceftriaxone
- Age < 2 years:
  - Promethazine
  - OTC teething medications containing benzocaine
- Age < 12 years:
  - Codeine
  - Tramadol

Not generally recommended

- Aspirin
- Quinolones
- Tetracyclines
- OTC cough and cold preparations

DRUGS NOT GENERALLY RECOMMENDED FOR PEDIATRIC PATIENTS

The Key Potentially Inappropriate Drugs in Pediatrics: The KIDs List is a useful resource to determine which medications are considered unsafe for use in children and reasons why they should be avoided. Examples of drugs to avoid in children are noted in the Study Tip Gal above and discussed further below.

- Promethazine is contraindicated in children < 2 years old due to the risk of severe or fatal respiratory depression.
- Topical teething products containing benzocaine increase the risk of methemoglobinemia. The FDA recommends against their use in children < 2 years.
- Codeine is metabolized to morphine by the CYP2D6 enzyme; children who over-express this enzyme produce a higher than expected amount of morphine. This can result in respiratory depression and possibly death. There is a similar risk for tramadol (also metabolized to an active metabolite by CYP2D6).
  - Codeine and tramadol are contraindicated in all patients < 12 years old and in those < 18 years old after tonsillectomy/adenoidectomy.
  - Prescription cough and cold medications that contain codeine or hydrocodone are no longer indicated in patients < 18 years old.

- Tetracyclines are not recommended in children < 8 years of age because they stain teeth and deposit into mineralizing (i.e., growing) bone and cartilage, which slows bone growth.
  - One notable exception is the treatment of tick-borne Rickettsial diseases (e.g., Rocky Mountain spotted fever). Doxycycline is the most effective treatment (see the Infectious Diseases II chapter) and is recommended in pediatric patients, because the risk to the teeth and bone is outweighed by the risk of severe illness or death.
- Quinolones are generally not recommended in pediatric patients due to the possibility of cartilage, bone and muscle adverse effects. However, for select conditions (e.g., anthrax, complicated urinary tract infections, cystic fibrosis), the benefits may outweigh the risks.

VACCINE-PREVENTABLE CHILDHOOD DISEASES

Vaccine-preventable diseases occur more commonly than in previous years due to lower immunization rates in some areas (see the Immunizations chapter for vaccine information). The symptoms of the more common vaccine-preventable diseases are noted in the table below.

ILLNESS	CLASSIC SYMPTOMS		NOTES
Measles	Koplik spots (small white spots on the inside of the mouth that appear 2-5 days prior to the rash), maculopapular rash, fever, malaise, cough, rhinitis, conjunctivitis	phichet chaiyabin/Shutterstock.com	Transmission is airborne and measles is highly contagious; If not immune, 90% of people who are in contact with an infected person will also become infected Prevention: MMR vaccine
Mumps	Swollen salivary glands under the ears (parotitis), fever, headache, myalgia, fatigue, loss of appetite; up to 50% of patients have mild or no symptoms	airdone/Shutterstock.com	Prevention: MMR vaccine
Rubella	Rash (fine, pink, begins on the face and quickly spreads to the rest of the body), fever, swollen glands, cold-like symptoms, aching joints; up to 50% of patients have mild or no symptoms	Akkalak Aiempradit/Shutterstock.com	Can cause birth defects if contracted by a pregnant woman Prevention: MMR vaccine

ILLNESS	CLASSIC SYMPTOMS	NOTES
Polio	Fever, sore throat, fatigue, nausea, headache, abdominal pain; can cause severe nerve damage (paralytic polio) and post-polio syndrome (progressive weakness and cognitive issues) podsy/Shutterstock.com	Prevention: IPV vaccine
Pertussis (Whooping cough)	Sudden cough outbursts ("whoop" sounding cough), fever, rhinitis, bluish skin (cyanosis), vomiting, fatigue	Can cause respiratory failure and death, especially in infants Prevention: DTaP vaccine
Rotavirus	Severe, watery diarrhea, fever, vomiting	Can lead to dehydration and death Most likely to occur in the winter and spring (December through June) Prevention: rotavirus vaccine
Chickenpox (Varicella)	Itchy rash, fever, malaise The rash appears as crops of sores (head, then trunk, then arms and legs), that turn into blisters, burst, then form crusts John-Kelly/Shutterstock.com	Long-term implications include shingles (herpes zoster) with risk of ophthalmic involvement and postherpetic neuralgia (severe pain after the infection) Prevention: varicella vaccine

Select Guidelines/References

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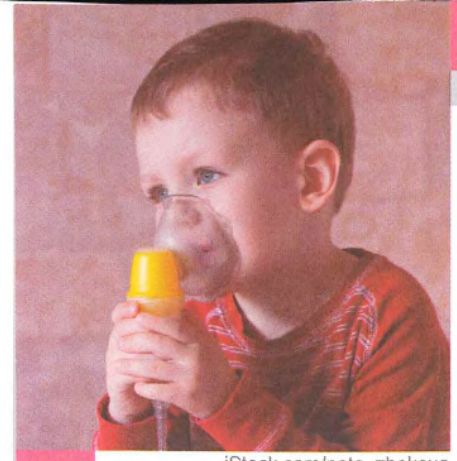

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CHAPTER 55

CYSTIC FIBROSIS

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= Study Tip Gal

BACKGROUND

Cystic fibrosis (CF) is an incurable, hereditary disease caused by a gene mutation for the protein cystic fibrosis transmembrane conductance regulator (CFTR). The mutation causes abnormal transport of chloride, bicarbonate and sodium ions across the epithelium, leading to thick, viscous secretions. The thick mucus affects the lungs, pancreas, liver and intestines, which causes difficulty breathing, lung infections and digestive complications. Cystic fibrosis refers to the scarring (fibrosis) and cyst formation that occurs in the pancreas. The average life expectancy of a person with CF is 35 – 40 years; more than 75% of patients are diagnosed by age 2 years. The disease is progressive, with some qualifying for lung transplantation.

DIAGNOSIS

Newborn screening is performed in the U.S. in the first 2 – 3 days after a baby is born. If the initial screening identifies a risk of CF, then a sweat chloride test ("sweat test") is performed to confirm the diagnosis; it measures the amount of salt (chloride) in the sweat, which is high in patients with CF.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Classic symptoms of CF are salty tasting skin, poor growth, poor weight gain, thick/sticky mucus production, frequent lung infections, cough and shortness of breath. Patients experience obstruction of pancreatic ducts causing steatorrhea (fatty stools) and poor absorption of nutrients (e.g., fat-soluble vitamins). Clubbing of fingers may be present. Malnutrition and failure to thrive can result if CF is not treated.

DRUG TREATMENT

The goals of therapy include preventing/treating lung infections, maintaining adequate nutrition and optimizing quality of life. Most patients receive airway clearance therapies (see drug table on the next page), inhaled antibiotics targeting *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* and pancreatic enzyme replacement. Targeted CFTR modulators reduce the frequency of exacerbations and may be appropriate for some patients. Early diagnosis and a comprehensive treatment plan can improve survival and quality of life. Specialty clinics for CF can be found in many communities.

LUNG COMPLICATIONS

Multiple medications are used to manage the thick mucus in the lungs and reduce the risk of infections. Administering the inhaled medications in the correct order is critical to maximize absorption and effectiveness. Airway clearance therapies (e.g., bronchodilators, hypertonic saline, dornase alfa) are given before inhaled antibiotics (see Study Tip Gal).

Inhaled therapies are the foundation of treatment for CF. Drugs are delivered directly to the lungs, resulting in minimal systemic absorption to reduce the risk of toxicity. Although inhaled medications are an effective form of drug delivery, the average patient with CF receives up to 10 doses of inhaled medications daily, which can take 2 – 3 hours to administer. This requires lifestyle modification since dosing must be scheduled around work, school and other activities.

INFECTIONS

INTERMITTENT INFECTION

Impaired mucus clearance causes bacterial colonization and lung infections. Common organisms seen early in the disease are *Staphylococcus aureus* and *Haemophilus influenzae*, followed by *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* in adolescents and adults. Acute pulmonary exacerbations are characterized by an increase in cough, sputum production with a change in sputum color (greenish), shortness of breath and a rapid decline in FEV1. Treatment often includes an extended course of antibiotics (2 – 4 weeks) and modalities to increase airway clearance.

For infections caused by *P. aeruginosa*, two IV drugs are recommended to provide synergy and prevent resistance. These include aminoglycosides, beta-lactams, quinolones and others that cover *P. aeruginosa* (see the Infectious Diseases I chapter). Doses tend to be larger than normal to address altered pharmacokinetics in patients with CF, to obtain therapeutic drug concentrations in lung tissue and to overcome reduced susceptibility of the bacteria chronically colonizing the airways.

CHRONIC INFECTION

Lung infections occur intermittently at first, but eventually become chronic. Chronic lung infections with *P. aeruginosa* are associated with a more rapid decline in pulmonary function. Inhaled antibiotics are recommended for patients with chronic *P. aeruginosa* infections to ↓ bacterial burden. Treatment is cycled with 28 days on therapy, followed by 28 days off. If a patient is using a bronchodilator and/or mucolytic (e.g., dornase alfa), these should be given prior to the antibiotic inhalation (see Study Tip Gal).

Inhaled antibiotics should be taken as prescribed to reduce the risk of developing antibiotic resistance. Inhaled aztreonam, an antibiotic used for chronic suppression, is dosed TID and should be scheduled as close to every 8 hours as possible. This dosing optimizes bacterial killing around the clock, while minimizing the time when the antibiotic concentration is low (which can worsen resistance). Dosing every 8 hours requires waking up in the middle of the night, so it is more convenient to give doses during waking hours, however the doses must be at least 4 hours apart to provide adequate drug concentrations throughout the day. Similarly, inhaled tobramycin is dosed every 12 hours and should be scheduled as close to every 12 hours as possible with at least 6 hours between doses.

INHALED MEDICATIONS FOR CF

ORDER	INTERVENTION	PURPOSE
1st	Inhaled bronchodilator (e.g., albuterol)	Opens airways
2nd	Hypertonic saline	Mobilizes mucus to ↑ airway clearance
3rd	Dornase alfa	↓ viscosity of (thins) mucus to ↑ clearance
4th	Chest physiotherapy	Mobilizes mucus to ↑ clearance
5th	Inhaled antibiotics	↓ airway infection

Oral medications (e.g., azithromycin, pancreatic enzyme products) can be given at any time.

A six month trial of oral azithromycin can be considered for patients with chronic infection who are worsening on conventional treatment. Azithromycin has no direct bactericidal activity against *Pseudomonas*, but disrupts biofilm formation by the bacteria which can improve lung function and decrease exacerbations.

TREATMENT FOR LUNG COMPLICATIONS AND INFECTIONS

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Airway Clearance Therapies (Inhaled)		
Bronchodilator (e.g., albuterol)	2-4 times daily	See Asthma chapter
Hypertonic saline *(HyperSal, PulmoSal)* 4 mL unit-dose vial	4 mL via nebulizer twice daily	Hypertonic saline is supplied as small ready-to-use vials that are delivered via a nebulizer *PulmoSal* is buffered to match physiologic pH of the airway surface Hypertonic saline is a high-alert drug, especially with IV administration
Dornase alfa *(Pulmozyme)* 2.5 mg single-use ampule	2.5 mg daily with recommended nebulizer and compressor system	Decreases viscosity of mucus (i.e., thins the mucus) **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Hypersensitivity to Chinese hamster ovary (CHO) products **SIDE EFFECTS** Chest pain, fever, rash, rhinitis, laryngitis, voice alteration, throat irritation **NOTES** Store ampules in the refrigerator (do not expose to room temp ≥ 24 hrs) Protect from light Do not mix with any other drug in the nebulizer

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Antibiotics (Inhaled): target *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* colonization to ↓ infections/hospitalization		
Tobramycin ***(TOBI, TOBI Podhaler****, Bethkis, Kitabis Pak)* Solution for inhalation: *TOBI, Kitabis:* 300 mg/5 mL single-use ampule *Bethkis:* 300 mg/4 mL single-use ampule Capsule for inhalation: *TOBI Podhaler:* 28 mg capsules in blister card	Age ≥ 6 years: **Solution for inhalation** *TOBI, Bethkis, Kitabis Pak:* 300 mg via nebulizer Q12H **Capsule for inhalation** *TOBI Podhaler:* 112 mg (4 x 28 mg caps) via inhalation Q12H	**SIDE EFFECTS** Ototoxicity, tinnitus, voice alteration, mouth and throat pain, dizziness, bronchospasm **NOTES** Give for 28 days, followed by 28 days off cycle Dosed every 12 hours, but must be at least 6 hours apart *TOBI, Bethkis, Kitabis:* refrigeration recommended (can be kept at room temperature up to 28 days); store in foil pouch to protect from light; do not mix with any other drug in the nebulizer *TOBI:* use *PARI LC Plus* nebulizer & *DeVilbiss Pulmo-Aide* compressor *Bethkis:* use *PARI LC Plus* nebulizer & *PARI Vios* compressor *TOBI Podhaler:* store capsules at room temperature in a dry place; use with *Podhaler* (device dispensed with caps); do not swallow caps
Aztreonam *(Cayston)* Solution for inhalation ***Azactam*** (IV) – for acute infection	Age ≥ 7 years: 75 mg via nebulizer TID	**SIDE EFFECTS** Allergic reactions (may be severe), bronchospasm, fever, wheezing, cough, chest discomfort **NOTES** Give for 28 days, followed by 28 days off cycle Dosed every 8 hours, but must be at least 4 hours apart Refrigeration recommended (can keep at room temp up to 28 days) Do not mix with any other drug in the nebulizer Use with *Altera* nebulizer system Protect from light
Antibiotic (Oral): to ↓ inflammation and ↓ exacerbations		
Azithromycin ***(Zithromax)*** Off-label	Age ≥ 6 years: < 40 kg: 250 mg 3 times/week ≥ 40 kg: 500 mg 3 times/week	**SIDE EFFECTS** In CF: tinnitus, nausea, risk of QT prolongation **NOTES** Do not use as monotherapy for nontuberculous lung infections

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Enzymes are proteins that break bonds and speed up chemical reactions (in addition to other functions). You can spot an enzyme because the generic name usually ends in "-ase."

Lungs: Dornase alfa / *Pulmozyme* indicates that it is an enzyme

- Breaks DNA strands into smaller pieces, thinning the mucus to make it easier to cough up

GI Tract: Pancrelipase

- Pancrelipase contains the enzymes lipase, protease and amylase that break down fats, proteins and starches
  - *Zenpep* identifies that it is a pancreatic enzyme product (PEP)
  - *Creon* comes from the generic name pancrelipase
  - *Viokace* indicates that it is an enzyme by the suffix (slightly different spelling)

PANCREATIC ENZYME PRODUCTS

The thick mucus in CF obstructs pancreatic enzyme flow, resulting in ↓ enzymes reaching the gastrointestinal tract and subsequent malabsorption. Frequent, greasy, oily, foul-smelling stools are manifestations of pancreatic insufficiency. Most patients with CF need to supplement their diet with pancreatic enzyme products (PEPs) to break down fat, starches and protein. This is called pancreatic enzyme replacement therapy (PERT).

Pancrelipase is a natural product harvested from porcine pancreatic glands which contains a combination of lipase, amylase and protease. PEPs are formulated to dissolve in the more basic pH of the duodenum. The dose is individualized for each patient and is based on the lipase component. Once PEP therapy is started, the dose is adjusted every 3 – 4 days until stools are normalized.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Pancrelipase ***(Creon, Viokace, Zenpep,*** *Lip-Prot-Amyl, Pancreaze, Pertzye)*	**Initial** Age < 1 year: varies by product Age 1-3 years: lipase 1,000 units/kg/meal Age ≥ 4 years: lipase 500 units/kg/meal **Max (all ages)** Lipase ≤ 2,500 units/kg/meal or ≤ 10,000 units/kg/day Doses > 6,000 units/kg/meal are associated with colonic stricture	**WARNINGS** Fibrosing colonopathy advancing to colonic strictures (rare: higher risk with doses > 10,000 lipase units/kg/day), mucosal irritation, hyperuricemia **SIDE EFFECTS** Abdominal pain, flatulence, nausea, HA, neck pain **MONITORING** Abdominal symptoms, nutritional intake, weight, height (children), stool, fecal fat **NOTES** See Study Tip Gal below

COMMON ISSUES WITH PANCREATIC ENZYME PRODUCTS

Pancreatic enzyme replacement helps digest food, maintain weight and improve nutrient absorption.

- PEP formulations are not interchangeable. Commonly used products are *Creon, Viokace* and *Zenpep.*
- *Viokace* is the only PEP that is a tablet. It is non-enteric coated and must be given with a PPI.
- All other PEPs are capsules.
  - Do not crush or chew the contents of the capsules.
  - Delayed-release capsules with enteric-coated microspheres or microtablets may be opened and sprinkled on soft, acidic foods (pH ≤ 4.5) like applesauce. Avoid foods with high pH such as dairy.
  - Do not retain the capsule contents in the mouth. Swallow immediately and follow with water to avoid mucosal irritation and stomatitis.
- Take PEPs before or with all meals and snacks. High-fat meals may require higher doses.
  - Use 50% of the mealtime dose with snacks.
- Protect from moisture; dispense in original container (except: *Zenpep,* some *Creon* strengths). Do not refrigerate.

CYSTIC FIBROSIS TRANSMEMBRANE CONDUCTANCE REGULATOR (CFTR) MODULATORS

Ivacaftor increases the time the CFTR channels remain open, which enhances chloride transport activity. Lumacaftor, tezacaftor and elexacaftor correct the CFTR folding defect, which increases the amount of CFTR delivered to the cell surface. Because each drug is approved for very specific mutations, genotype testing must be performed prior to initiation. The most common mutation in the CFTR gene is a homozygous F508del mutation (two copies of the same allele). Combination products are approved for the most common CF mutation.

DRUG	APPROVED MUTATION	SAFETY/NOTES
Ivacaftor *(Kalydeco)* Tablet, oral granules	Not approved for homozygous F508del mutation; approved in other responsive mutations	**WARNINGS** ↑ LFTs, cataracts in children **NOTES** Take with high-fat containing food Minimum age cut-off for use varies by product; confirm with package labeling
Lumacaftor/ivacaftor *(Orkambi)* Tablet, oral granules	Approved for homozygous F508del mutation and additional responsive mutations	
Tezacaftor/ivacaftor *(Symdeko)* Co-packaged tablets		
Elexacaftor/tezacaftor/ivacaftor *(Trikafta)* Co-packaged tablets, oral granules		
Vanzacaftor/tezacaftor/deutivacaftor *(Alyftrek)* Tablet		

CFTR MODULATOR DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Ivacaftor is a major CYP3A4 substrate and should be avoided with strong CYP3A4 inducers. Dose adjustments may be needed if used with CYP3A4 inhibitors.

OTHER CONCERNS

Appropriate measures to address a patient's growth, nutrition, bone health and other CF complications is critical.

- A high-fat and calorically dense diet helps with nutrition, weight and growth, ↑ energy needs and ↑ survival.
- Vitamin supplements are required, especially the fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E and K for normal cellular function. Calcium and vitamin D intake/absorption should be monitored to maximize bone health.
- Many patients with CF will eventually require insulin for treatment of CF-related diabetes mellitus.
- If the patient maintains good health, the chances of qualifying for a lung transplant are improved.

KEY COUNSELING POINTS

See the Drug Formulations and Patient Counseling chapter for counseling language/layman's terminology.

PANCREATIC ENZYME PRODUCTS

- Take at the beginning of a meal or snack. Take half of the mealtime dose with snacks.
- Swallow whole.
- Contents can be sprinkled on a spoonful of soft food (e.g., applesauce, pureed bananas or pears). Use right away.
- Do not mix with dairy products.
- Drink plenty of non-caffeinated liquids every day.

TOBI PODHALER

- Do not swallow capsules.
- Use only the provided *Podhaler* device.
- Take doses as close to 12 hours, but no less than 6 hours, apart.

Select Guidelines/References

ECFS Best Practice Guidelines: The 2018 Revision. J Cyst Fibros 2018;17:153-78.

Cystic Fibrosis Foundation: Clinical Care Guidelines. https://www.cff.org/Care/Clinical-Care-Guidelines/ (accessed 2025 Mar 19).

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SPECIAL POPULATIONS

CHAPTER 56

TRANSPLANT

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= Study Tip Gal

BACKGROUND

Transplantation is one of the most challenging and complex areas of modern medicine. The main goal of transplantation is to prolong patient and graft (i.e., the transplanted organ or tissue) survival. United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS) is the organization responsible for organ allocation in the U.S. Organs that have been successfully transplanted include the kidney, liver, pancreas, heart and lungs; kidney and liver transplants are most common. Bone marrow transplantation has been used successfully for certain hematological and immunodeficiency conditions.

PREVENTION OF GRAFT REJECTION

An allograft is the transplant of an organ or tissue from one individual to another of the same species with a different genotype. This can also be called an allogenic transplant. A transplanted organ from a genetically identical donor (such as an identical twin) is called an isograft. An autograft (also called autologous transplant) is a transplant in the same patient, from one site to another (e.g., autologous stem cell transplant, skin graft).

Rejection occurs when the body has an immune response to the allograft. This response may lead to transplant failure, the need for organ failure support (e.g., dialysis) or removal of the transplanted organ. Immunosuppressant medications prevent or stop the patient's immune system from attacking the new organ. These drugs are given before or at the time of transplant (induction immunosuppression), chronically after transplant (maintenance immunosuppression) or in the event of an acute rejection episode. Immunosuppressants share many significant risks and warnings (see Study Tip Gal on the next page).

Prior to any transplant, tissue typing or crossmatching is performed to assess donor-recipient compatibility for human leukocyte antigen (HLA) and ABO blood group. A mismatch in either instance would lead to a fast, acute rejection (see Study Tip Gal to the right).

A panel reactive antibody (PRA) test can be used to gauge the degree to which the recipient is "sensitized" to foreign (or "non-self") proteins. A high PRA correlates with the likelihood of graft rejection and could necessitate a desensitization protocol before the transplant.

AVOIDING AN "ABO MISMATCH" OR INCOMPATIBILITY REACTION

BLOOD GROUP	CAN GIVE BLOOD TO	CAN RECEIVE BLOOD FROM
AB Universal receiver	AB	AB A B O
A	A AB	A O
B	B AB	B O
O Universal donor	AB A B O	O

BOXED WARNINGS FOR TRANSPLANT DRUGS OVERLAP

Infection Risk
Transplant drugs suppress the immune system and prevent organ rejection. An immunosuppressed state increases the risk of different types of infections. Prophylaxis for infections is often required and can include some of the same drugs used for opportunistic infection in HIV when the CD4+ count is low.

Cancer Risk
A healthy immune system suppresses some types of cancers, including lymphomas, melanoma and non-melanoma skin cancers. Transplant drugs blunt these processes making sun protective measures and cancer screening essential for transplant patients.

"Only Experienced Prescribers..."
Transplant drugs require experienced prescribers. This is especially important when the drugs are started. The transplant team includes several types of highly skilled practitioners, including pharmacists who have specialized in managing transplant drugs.

INDUCTION IMMUNOSUPPRESSION

Induction immunosuppression is given immediately before or at the time of transplant to prevent acute rejection during the early post-transplant period. It consists of a short course of effective intravenous (IV) medication, either a polyclonal or monoclonal antibody (these end in "-mab"), most often combined with high-dose IV steroids. In some cases, high-dose IV steroids may be given alone.

A commonly used induction drug is basiliximab, an interleukin-2 (IL-2) receptor antagonist (see figure on the next page). The IL-2 receptor is expressed on activated T-lymphocytes and is a critical pathway for activating T-lymphocytes to attack and reject the organ. Basiliximab does not deplete immature T-lymphocytes and therefore cannot be used to treat rejection (only for prevention). Because the protein is humanized, infusion-related reactions are unlikely, and pre-medication is not necessary.

As an alternative to basiliximab, patients at higher risk of rejection can receive a lymphocyte-depleting medication, antithymocyte globulin. These drugs are made by injecting human T-lymphocytes into animals, allowing the animals to make antibodies against the T-lymphocytes, and then administering the animal's purified antibodies back to the human transplant recipients. Because they deplete both mature and immature T-lymphocytes, they can be used for both induction and treatment of rejection. Alemtuzumab, a monoclonal antibody usually used for leukemia and multiple sclerosis, can also be used off-label for induction (only available through a restricted distribution program). Induction immunosuppression may not be required if the transplant is from an identical twin.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Interleukin-2 (IL-2) receptor antagonist – Chimeric (murine/human) monoclonal antibody that inhibits the IL-2 receptor on the surface of activated T-lymphocytes.		
Basiliximab *(Simulect)* Injection	20 mg IV on the day of transplant (day 0) then repeat dose on post-operative day 4	**BOXED WARNINGS** Administer under the supervision of a physician experienced in immunosuppressive therapy. **SIDE EFFECTS** ↑ BP, fever, stomach upset, nausea/vomiting, cramping, peripheral edema, dyspnea, upper respiratory irritation/infection, tremor, painful urination **MONITORING** Signs and symptoms of hypersensitivity (within 24 hours) and infection

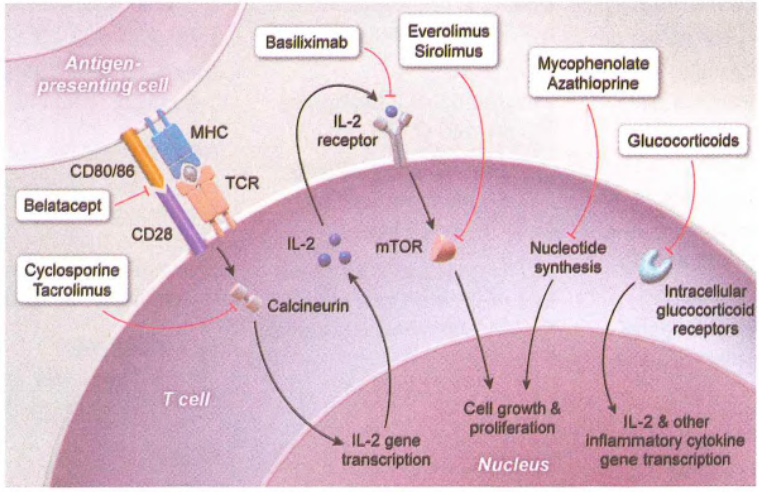
DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Antithymocyte globulins – Bind to antigens on T-lymphocytes and interfere with their function.		
Antithymocyte Globulin (***Atgam*** – Equine) (***Thymoglobulin*** – Rabbit) Injection	*Atgam:* 5-15 mg/kg/day IV *Thymoglobulin:* 1-1.5 mg/kg/day IV Normal equine doses are approximately 10-fold greater than the rabbit product	**BOXED WARNINGS** Administer under the supervision of a physician experienced in immunosuppressive therapy. Anaphylaxis can occur; intradermal skin testing recommended prior to the first dose of *Atgam.* **SIDE EFFECTS** Infusion-related reactions/cytokine release syndrome (fever, chills, pruritus, rash, ↓ BP; particularly common with the first dose), infections, leukopenia, thrombocytopenia, chest pain, ↑ BP, edema **MONITORING** CBC with differential, vital signs during administration, lymphocyte profile (T-cell count) **NOTES** Premedicate (diphenhydramine, acetaminophen and steroids) to lessen infusion-related reactions. Epinephrine and resuscitative equipment should be nearby. Administer over at least 4 hours (6 hours for the first dose of *Thymoglobulin)* to minimize infusion reactions. Infuse with an in-line filter.

MAINTENANCE IMMUNOSUPPRESSION

Maintenance immunosuppression is usually provided by the combination of:

- A calcineurin inhibitor (CNI) such as cyclosporine or tacrolimus. Tacrolimus is the first-line CNI.
  - Belatacept may be used as an alternative to a CNI.
- An antiproliferative agent such as mycophenolate or azathioprine. Mycophenolate is first-line in most protocols.
  - Mammalian target of rapamycin (mTOR) inhibitors (everolimus and sirolimus) may be used as an alternative.

Mechanism of action of common immunosuppressants



IL-2 = interleukin-2; MHC = major histocompatibility complex; mTOR = mammalian target of rapamycin; TCR = T-cell receptor.

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- With or without steroids (typically prednisone). If the patient is low immunological risk, the steroids can be discontinued; otherwise, the long-term adverse effects need to be considered.

Suppressing the immune system via multiple mechanisms with different drug classes (see figure) is designed to both lower toxicity risk of the individual immunosuppressants and reduce the risk of graft rejection. Doses and goal blood levels of maintenance immunosuppression vary depending on the type of transplant, drug interactions, time from transplant, risk for rejection and specific transplant center protocols. The following drug tables contain general dosing and blood level information.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Calcineurin inhibitors – Suppress cellular immunity by inhibiting T-lymphocyte activation.		
Cyclosporine (modified: ***Gengraf, Neoral;*** non-modified: ***Sandimmune)*** Capsule, oral solution, injection ***Restasis,*** *Cequa, Verkazia* – ophthalmic for dry eyes	Dosing is individualized to achieve goal trough level of 100-400 ng/mL Cyclosporine (modified): 4-8 mg/kg/day PO divided Q12H Cyclosporine (non-modified): 3-10 mg/kg/day PO divided Q12H IV *Sandimmune* dose is 1/3 of the PO dose	**BOXED WARNINGS** ↑ risk of malignancy (lymphoma, skin cancer); ↑ risk of infection; nephrotoxicity (can occur at any trough level); ↑ BP; due to differences in bioavailability, cyclosporine (modified) and cyclosporine (non-modified) are not interchangeable. Should only be prescribed by healthcare providers experienced in immunosuppressive therapy. **SIDE EFFECTS** ↑ BG, hyperlipidemia, hyperkalemia, hypomagnesemia, gingival hyperplasia, hirsutism, neurotoxicity (tremor, headache, paresthesia), hyperuricemia, edema, abdominal discomfort, nausea, diarrhea, viral infections, viral associated nephropathy **MONITORING** Trough levels, serum electrolytes (K and Mg), renal function, LFTs, BP, blood glucose, lipid profile **NOTES** Numerous drug interactions: CYP3A4 inhibitor and a CYP3A4 and P-gp substrate. Do not administer oral liquid from a plastic or Styrofoam cup. Use the syringe provided and do not rinse before or after use (see Key Counseling Points). IV: non-PVC sets should be used to minimize leaching of DEHP.
Tacrolimus ***(Prograf)*** Capsule, granules for oral solution, injection Extended-release capsule – *Astagraf XL* Extended-release tablet – ***Envarsus XR*** *Protopic* – topical for eczema	Dosing is individualized to achieve goal trough level of 3-15 ng/mL *Prograf:* 0.1-0.2 mg/kg/day PO divided Q12H *Astagraf XL* and *Envarsus XR* are given as a single dose every 24 hours PO IR doses are 3-4 times that of IV; start oral dosing 8-12 hours after last IV dose	**BOXED WARNINGS** ↑ risk of malignancy (lymphoma, skin cancer); ↑ risk of infection Extended-release tacrolimus *(Astagraf XL)* associated with ↑ mortality in female liver transplant recipients. **SIDE EFFECTS** ↑ BP, ↑ BG, hyperlipidemia, nephrotoxicity, hypomagnesemia, hypo/hyperkalemia, alopecia, neurotoxicity (tremor, headache, dizziness, paresthesia), edema, hypo/hyperphosphatemia, QT prolongation, diarrhea, urinary tract infection, anemia, leukopenia, leukocytosis, thrombocytopenia, elevated liver enzymes, arthralgia **MONITORING** Trough levels, serum electrolytes (K, Phos and Mg), renal function, LFTs, BP, blood glucose, lipid profile **NOTES** Administer under the supervision of a physician experienced in immunosuppressive therapy. Do not interchange XL/XR to immediate-release (IR) without prescriber approval. Numerous drug interactions: CYP3A4 and P-gp substrate. Food decreases absorption. Avoid alcoholic beverages with *Astagraf XL* and *Envarsus XR* (↑ rate of release and side effects). IV is administered as a continuous infusion; must use non-PVC bag and tubing.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Antiproliferative agents – Inhibit T- and B-lymphocyte proliferation by altering purine nucleotide synthesis.		
Azathioprine *(Azasan, Imuran)* Tablet, injection	1-3 mg/kg PO daily CrCl < 50 mL/min: adjustment required	**BOXED WARNINGS** ↑ risk of malignancy (lymphoma, skin cancer) **WARNINGS** Myelosuppression, either dose-related, or with conventional doses due to a genetic deficiency of thiopurine methyltransferase (TPMT), both requiring dose adjustment; ↑ risk of infection **SIDE EFFECTS** GI (severe N/V/D), acute pancreatitis, rash, hepatotoxicity **MONITORING** LFTs, CBC, renal function
Mycophenolate Mofetil *(CellCept)* Tablet, capsule, suspension, injection **Mycophenolic Acid *(Myfortic)*** Delayed-release tablet	*CellCept:* 1-1.5 g PO/IV Q12H *Myfortic:* 360-720 mg PO Q12H	**BOXED WARNINGS** ↑ risk of malignancy (lymphoma, skin cancer); ↑ risk of infection; ↑ risk of congenital malformations and spontaneous abortions when used during pregnancy Should only be prescribed by healthcare providers experienced in immunosuppressive therapy. **SIDE EFFECTS** Diarrhea, abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, leukopenia, anemia, thrombocytopenia, ↑ or ↓ BP, edema, tachycardia, pain, ↑ BG, hypo/hyperkalemia, hypomagnesemia, hypocalcemia, hypercholesterolemia, infections **MONITORING** CBC, intolerable diarrhea, pregnancy tests, renal function, LFTs, signs of infection **NOTES** REMS drug *CellCept* and *Myfortic* are not interchangeable due to differences in absorption *(CellCept* 500 mg ≅ to *Myfortic* 360 mg). Interchange requires provider approval. *Myfortic* is enteric coated to decrease diarrhea. Tablets must be protected from light; dispense in a light-resistant container, such as the manufacturer's original container. *CellCept* IV is stable in D5W only. Do not use IV if allergy to polysorbate 80. Begin infusion within 4 hours of reconstitution. Decreases efficacy of oral contraceptives.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Mammalian target of rapamycin (mTOR) kinase inhibitors – Inhibit T-lymphocyte activation/proliferation; may be synergistic with CNIs.		
Everolimus *(Zortress)* Tablet *Afinitor* – for certain cancers	Dosing is individualized to achieve goal trough level of 3-8 ng/mL 0.5-1.5 mg PO Q12H	**BOXED WARNINGS** ↑ risk of malignancy (lymphoma, skin cancer); ↑ risk of infection Should only be prescribed by healthcare providers experienced in immunosuppressive therapy. Everolimus: when used with cyclosporine, reduced doses of cyclosporine are recommended; ↑ risk of renal artery thrombosis can result in graft loss; not recommended in heart transplant Sirolimus: not recommended for use in liver (hepatic artery thrombosis) or lung transplantation **WARNINGS** Hyperlipidemia, impaired wound healing, pneumonitis (discontinue drug if this develops), angioedema, fluid accumulation (surgical site), proteinuria, male infertility Everolimus: ↑ risk hepatic artery thrombosis can result in graft loss (do not use within 30 days of transplant) Sirolimus: decline in renal function (when used long-term with cyclosporine), latent viral infections, ↑ risk of hemolytic uremic syndrome when used with a CNI **SIDE EFFECTS** Peripheral edema, ↑ BP, ↑ BG, constipation, N/V/D, abdominal pain, headache, fatigue, fever, rash/pruritus, acne, anemia, leukopenia, thrombocytopenia, stomatitis **MONITORING** Trough levels, renal function, LFTs, lipids, blood glucose, BP, CBC, urine protein, signs of infection **NOTES** Numerous drug interactions: CYP3A4 and P-gp substrate. Everolimus: protect from light and moisture. Sirolimus: tablets and oral solution are not bioequivalent.
Sirolimus *(Rapamune)* Tablet, oral solution	Dosing is individualized to achieve goal trough level of 4-12 ng/mL 1-5 mg PO daily	

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Belatacept – Inhibits T-lymphocyte activation and production of inflammatory mediators by binding to CD80 and CD86 on antigen presenting cells, blocking costimulation with CD28 on T-lymphocytes.		
Belatacept *(Nulojix)* Injection	Initial: 10 mg/kg on days 1, 5 and at the end of weeks 2, 4, 8 and 12 after transplantation Maintenance: 5 mg/kg at the end of week 16 after transplantation and monthly thereafter Dose using TBW and round dose to the nearest 12.5 mg	**BOXED WARNINGS** ↑ risk of post-transplant lymphoproliferative disorder (PTLD) with the highest risk in recipients without immunity to Epstein-Barr Virus (EBV); use in EBV seropositive patients only Increased risk of infection and malignancies; avoid use in liver transplant patients due to risk of graft loss and death Administer under the supervision of a physician experienced in immunosuppressive therapy. **WARNINGS** Increased risk of opportunistic infections, sepsis and/or fatal infections, ↑ risk of tuberculosis (TB); test for latent TB prior to initiation and treat latent TB prior to use **SIDE EFFECTS** Headache, anemia, leukopenia, constipation, diarrhea, nausea, peripheral edema, ↑ or ↓ BP, cough, photosensitivity, insomnia, urinary tract infection, pyrexia, ↑ or ↓ K, hypophosphatemia **MONITORING** Neurological, cognitive or behavioral signs/symptoms [consider progressive multifocal leukoencephalopathy (PML), PTLD or CNS infection]; signs/symptoms of infection, TB screening prior to initiation, EBV seropositive verification prior to initiation **NOTES** Use silicone-free disposable syringe (comes with drug).
Systemic steroids – Naturally occurring hormones that prevent or ↓ inflammatory and cytokine gene expression.		
Prednisone Tablet, oral solution	2.5-20 mg PO daily, or on alternate days	**SHORT-TERM SIDE EFFECTS** Fluid retention, stomach upset, emotional instability (euphoria, mood swings, irritability), insomnia, ↑ appetite, weight gain, acute rise in blood glucose and blood pressure with high doses **LONG-TERM SIDE EFFECTS** Adrenal suppression/Cushing syndrome, impaired wound healing, ↑ BP, diabetes, acne, osteoporosis, impaired growth in children. See Systemic Steroids & Autoimmune Conditions chapter for further information on chronic steroid use.

TRANSPLANT DRUGS: WHAT'S USED, WHEN

Immunosuppression protocols vary by center and type of transplant.

Induction Immunosuppressants

- Basiliximab, an interleukin-2 (IL-2) receptor antagonist
- Antithymocyte globulin if higher risk of rejection
- High-dose IV steroids

Maintenance Immunosuppressants

- Calcineurin inhibitors (CNIs) [tacrolimus (primarily) or cyclosporine]
  - Belatacept as an alternative to a CNI
- Adjuvant medications given with a CNI (to achieve adequate immunosuppression while decreasing the dose and toxicity of the individual drugs)
  - Antiproliferative agents [mycophenolate (primarily) or azathioprine]
  - mTOR inhibitors (everolimus or sirolimus)
- Steroids at lower or tapering doses

DRUG INTERACTIONS

PHARMACOKINETIC INTERACTIONS

- Cyclosporine inhibits CYP3A4. Both cyclosporine and tacrolimus are CYP3A4 and P-glycoprotein (P-gp) substrates. Inducers of either enzyme (e.g., carbamazepine, nafcillin, rifampin) decrease the CNI concentration, and inhibitors (e.g., azole antifungals, diltiazem, erythromycin) increase the CNI concentration. Both interact with the majority of drugs.
- Cyclosporine can ↑ sirolimus, everolimus and some statins (which transplant patients often require).
- Mycophenolate can decrease levels of hormonal contraception; mycophenolate levels can be decreased by antacids (containing aluminum, magnesium), multivitamins, metronidazole, PPIs, quinolones, sevelamer, bile acid resins and rifampin and derivatives.
- Azathioprine is metabolized by xanthine oxidase. Avoid using azathioprine with xanthine oxidase inhibitors (allopurinol or febuxostat). Febuxostat is contraindicated. If allopurinol is used, reduce the azathioprine dose by 75% and monitor for myelosuppression and GI side effects.

PHARMACODYNAMIC INTERACTIONS

Maintenance immunosuppressants have a high incidence of adverse effects that require monitoring and often intervention (e.g., nephrotoxicity, diabetes, hyperlipidemia). Caution with additive drugs that:

- Are nephrotoxic with CNIs (e.g., NSAIDs).
- Raise blood glucose with steroids, CNIs and mTOR inhibitors.
- Worsen lipids with mTOR inhibitors, steroids and cyclosporine.
- Raise blood pressure with CNIs and steroids.
- Are myelosuppressive with azathioprine and mycophenolate.

DRUG-FOOD AND NATURAL PRODUCT INTERACTIONS

- Avoid grapefruit juice and St. John's wort with CNIs.
- Tacrolimus absorption is decreased by food.

ORGAN TRANSPLANT COMPLICATIONS

MONITORING BY PATIENT & HEALTH CARE TEAM

In addition to symptoms of drug toxicity, patients should monitor for symptoms of organ rejection.

Monitoring Questions

Is it a symptom of drug **toxicity**?

Is it a symptom of **organ rejection**?

Is it a symptom of an **infection**?

Common symptoms of acute rejection include flu-like symptoms, such as chills, body aches, nausea, cough, shortness of breath and organ-specific symptoms that depend on the transplant type. Examples include:

- Heart failure symptoms or a new arrhythmia could be due to heart transplant rejection.
- A decrease in urine output, fluid retention, blood pressure elevation or graft tenderness could be due to kidney transplant rejection.

Immunosuppressive medications require careful monitoring (including drug trough levels for some) to minimize toxicities and the incidence of rejection. Trough levels should be drawn 30 minutes before a scheduled dose.

All transplant recipients must self-monitor for symptoms of infection:

- Fever of ≥ 100.4°F (38°C) (lower if elderly), chills
- Cough, more sputum or change in color of sputum, sore throat
- Pain with passing urine, ear or sinus pain
- Mouth sores or a wound that does not heal

ACUTE REJECTION

Acute rejection of the transplanted organ arises from either T-cell (cellular) or B-cell (humoral or antibody) mediated mechanisms. Both types can occur simultaneously (mixed rejection). Distinguishing the type and severity of rejection via biopsy is essential to determine treatment.

An initial approach to treating acute cellular rejection (ACR) is the administration of high-dose steroids and optimizing maintenance immunosuppression (e.g., increasing the trough level). Antithymocyte globulin is usually reserved for steroid-resistant or a more aggressive ACR.

Antibody-mediated rejection (AMR), sometimes referred to as humoral rejection, is more challenging to treat as the antibodies against the graft must be removed and then suppressed from recurring. This is accomplished with plasmapheresis and administration of intravenous immunoglobulin (IVIG) and steroids, and can be followed by a dose of rituximab (see the Acute & Critical Care Medicine chapter for more information on IVIG). Rituximab, a monoclonal antibody against the CD20 antigen on B-cells, may prevent further antibody development. See the Systemic Steroids & Autoimmune Conditions and Oncology chapters.

REDUCING INFECTION RISK

The effective use of immunosuppressants increases successful outcomes in organ transplantation but comes at the cost of an increased risk of infections. These infections are a major cause of morbidity and mortality in transplant recipients, and can be:

- Bacterial (e.g., surgical site)
- Viral (e.g., HSV reactivation)
- Opportunistic (e.g., fungal, protozoal)

Infection prophylaxis is essential, especially in the first six months post-transplant, when immunosuppression is highest, and after receiving treatment for acute rejection. The drugs used for infection prophylaxis are often the same as those used for treatment, but treatment usually requires larger doses, IV administration and a combination of drugs (see the Infectious Diseases IV chapter).

Routine infection control must include reducing risk from transmission, such as proper hand-washing techniques (see the Medication Safety & Quality Improvement chapter), air filtration systems, keeping the mouth clean and keeping away from dusty, crowded areas and sick people. Vaccine-preventable illness is an important consideration pre-transplant since live vaccines cannot be given post-transplant (see Study Tip Gal on next page).

CANCER

Cancer risk is higher in transplant recipients compared to the general population. The cancer risk is similar to that seen with the use of immunosuppressant medications used for autoimmune conditions.

Some cancer types are viral-mediated and related to immunosuppression, which causes increased cancer incidence. For example, the Epstein-Barr virus infects most people without serious consequences. In transplant recipients, there is a marked increase in the risk of malignancies associated with the infection.

Age-appropriate cancer screening is performed as part of the transplant candidate work-up. Screening for common cancers is routine, along with lifestyle measures known to reduce risk. Skin cancer is common following a transplant. Sunscreen must be used routinely, along with sun avoidance or sun protection with clothing. The skin should be assessed professionally at least annually.

CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE

Many of the medications used to prevent transplant rejection can cause metabolic syndrome. These patients are among the highest risk for cardiovascular disease (CVD), so blood pressure, blood glucose, cholesterol and weight must be tightly controlled. Specific goals based on transplant protocols are managed by specialists, including pharmacists, who have received transplant medicine training. Blood

glucose and post-transplantation diabetes mellitus (PTDM) are managed according to the ADA guidelines, and cholesterol according to the ACC/AHA guidelines. Weight is measured at each visit, and weight loss programs are used as-needed. Refer to the individual chapters for treatment of these conditions, but keep in mind that drug interactions and adverse effects may limit the use of standard first-line therapies in some transplant patients.

VACCINE-PREVENTABLE ILLNESS IN TRANSPLANT RECIPIENTS

Required vaccines are given pre-transplant if not up-to-date (see the Immunizations chapter).

Inactivated vaccines can be given 3-6 months post-transplant (once the immune system recovers from induction immunosuppression), except for the influenza vaccine, which can be administered 1 month post-transplant.

Live vaccines cannot be given post-transplant.

Important vaccines for transplant recipients:

- Influenza (inactivated, not live) annually
- Pneumococcal vaccine in adults ≥ 19 years. Give one of the following:
  - PCV20 × 1 or
  - PCV21 × 1 or
  - PCV15 × 1 followed by PPSV23 × 1 ≥ 8 weeks later.
- Varicella vaccine
  - High risk for serious varicella infections, with a very high risk of disseminated disease if infection occurs.
  - Vaccinate pre-transplant.
  - Vaccinate close contacts. Although there is a small risk that transmission could occur (from the vaccine recipient to the transplant recipient), ACIP states that the benefits outweigh the risk of transmission.
  - If a vaccinated close contact develops a rash, they are considered contagious and must avoid contact with the transplant recipient and contact their physician.
  - If the transplant patient develops a rash, they need to be seen right away.
- Hepatitis B vaccine
  - Pre-transplant or post-transplant (if indicated).

KEY COUNSELING POINTS

See the Drug Formulations and Patient Counseling chapter for counseling language/layman's terminology.

See the Drug Interactions section.

ALL IMMUNOSUPPRESSANTS

- Take the medication exactly as prescribed by your healthcare provider, at the same time every day. Stay consistent on how you take your medication.
- If getting a blood test to measure the drug level, take your medication after you have your blood drawn (not before). It is important to measure the lowest (trough) level of drug in your blood (30 minutes before a scheduled dose).
- Can increase risk of:
  - Infection.
  - Cancer, particularly lymphoma and skin cancer.
- Many drug interactions (including natural products and OTC medications).
- Live vaccines must be avoided. Check with your transplant team before getting any vaccines.

TACROLIMUS

- Take every 12 hours, or once daily in the morning for XL or XR formulations.
- Food decreases absorption, but many patients take this with meals to improve adherence. However it is taken (with food or without), consistency is most important.
- Can cause:
  - ☐ Nephrotoxicity.
  - ☐ Increased blood pressure.
  - ☐ Hyperglycemia.
  - ☐ Headache.
  - ☐ Alopecia.
- Avoid grapefruit.

MYCOPHENOLATE

- Requires a MedGuide.
- Mycophenolic acid and mycophenolate mofetil are not interchangeable. Do not switch between products unless directed by your prescriber.
- Can cause stomach upset (e.g., diarrhea).
- Avoid in pregnancy (teratogenic). Birth control pills do not work as well with this drug.
- Drug interactions due to binding. Avoid taking antacids and vitamins at the same time.

CYCLOSPORINE

- Different brands deliver different amounts of medication; do not switch brands of cyclosporine unless directed by your prescriber.
- Can cause:
  - ☐ Nephrotoxicity.
  - ☐ Increased blood pressure.
  - ☐ Hyperglycemia.
  - ☐ Gingival hyperplasia.
  - ☐ Hirsutism.
- Avoid grapefruit.
- Follow instructions for proper oral cyclosporine solution administration (see Study Tip Gal).

ADMINISTRATION OF CYCLOSPORINE ORAL SOLUTION*

Use the syringe provided by the manufacturer to measure the dose.

Do not rinse the syringe before or after use.

Use a compatible diluent** (e.g., orange juice) at room temperature.

Mix the dose and diluent thoroughly in a glass container. Do not administer from a plastic or Styrofoam cup.

Administer or drink immediately. Rinse the container with extra diluent to ensure the total dose is taken.

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Modified and non-modified.

***Consistently use the same diluent. Refer to the specific product package insert for guidance on compatible diluents*

Select Guidelines/References

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CHAPTER 57

WEIGHT LOSS

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= Key Drugs Guy

BACKGROUND

The CDC estimates that ~74% of U.S. adults and ~40% of children and adolescents are overweight or obese, which poses a major public health challenge. All patients should have an annual assessment of BMI (see the Calculations IV chapter for the BMI equation) to determine if they are overweight (BMI 25 – 29.9 kg/m^2, or ≥ 23 kg/m^2 in patients of Asian descent) or obese (BMI ≥ 30 kg/m^2, or ≥ 25 kg/m^2 in patients of Asian descent).

Overweight and obesity are chronic diseases that can lead to weight-related conditions, including type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular diseases (e.g., hypertension, dyslipidemia), GERD, obstructive sleep apnea, depression, osteoarthritis, hormonal diseases (e.g., polycystic ovary syndrome and infertility in females, hypogonadism in males) and metabolic dysfunction-associated steatohepatitis (MASH), formerly called nonalcoholic-associated fatty liver disease (NAFLD). In addition, being overweight can reduce quality of life and cause social stigmatization and discrimination.

MEDICAL CONDITIONS, DRUGS AND WEIGHT

An evaluation of a patient who is overweight or obese should include an assessment of other causes of weight gain, including untreated/undertreated medical conditions (e.g., hypothyroidism) and medications. In addition, when treating comorbid conditions in patients who are overweight or obese, medications that cause weight gain should be avoided (if possible) and medications that cause weight loss should be prioritized. See the Key Drugs Guy below for select medications that can cause weight gain or weight loss.

SELECT DRUGS THAT IMPACT WEIGHT

	MEDICATIONS THAT CAUSE WEIGHT GAIN	MEDICATIONS THAT CAUSE WEIGHT LOSS
Antiseizure drugs	■ Valproate ■ Gabapentin, pregabalin	■ Topiramate ■ Fenfluramine
Diabetes drugs	■ Insulin ■ Sulfonylureas ■ Meglitinides ■ Thiazolidinediones	■ GLP-1 agonists (e.g., liraglutide) ■ Tirzepatide
Psychiatric drugs	■ Antidepressants: mirtazapine, TCAs ■ Antipsychotics (e.g., clozapine, olanzapine, risperidone, quetiapine) ■ Lithium	■ Antidepressants: bupropion ■ ADHD drugs (e.g., amphetamine, methylphenidate)
Other	■ Integrase inhibitors (e.g., dolutegravir) ■ Systemic steroids (e.g., prednisone) ■ Oral contraceptives	■ Phosphodiesterase inhibitors: roflumilast, apremilast

TREATMENT PRINCIPLES

Weight loss is associated with a decrease in morbidity and mortality. It occurs when there is an "energy deficit" (i.e., decreased caloric intake and/or increased energy expenditure).

To facilitate weight loss, all patients should incorporate lifestyle interventions, including:

- A low-calorie meal plan, such as a Mediterranean diet or an individualized plan based on personal and cultural preferences. Generally, the meal plan should be low in carbohydrates and fat and high in protein.
- Physical activity, ideally ≥ 150 minutes per week, performed on three to five separate days. Resistance exercises are recommended two or three times weekly.
- Behavioral techniques, such as self-monitoring (of food intake, exercise, weight), goal setting, avoidance (e.g., via stress reduction and stimulus control) of triggers for eating, use of social support structures (e.g., group meetings) and/or guidance by trained educators.

A reasonable weight loss goal for most patients not receiving pharmacologic treatment or surgical intervention is a 5 – 10% decrease in total body weight within 6 months. If nonpharmacologic management alone is unable to achieve this goal or prevent progressive weight gain (i.e., to a BMI ≥ 27 kg/m^2), or if patients require larger weight reductions (e.g., a 20 – 30% decrease in total body weight), antiobesity medications can be considered.

In addition to lifestyle changes, any identified weight-related conditions should be treated and monitored.

DRUG TREATMENT

OTC SUPPLEMENTS

OTC weight loss supplements commonly contain stimulants (e.g., bitter orange) and/or excessive amounts of caffeine, which can be packaged under different names (e.g., guarana, concentrated green tea powder). Because they are generally ineffective and can be harmful, especially in patients with cardiovascular disease (see the Dietary Supplements, Natural & Complementary Medicine chapter), they are not recommended.

ANTIOBESITY MEDICATIONS

Antiobesity medications primarily work by increasing satiety (feeling full) and/or decreasing appetite, which curbs hunger and the desire to eat. They are indicated (in addition to nonpharmacologic interventions) for nonpregnant patients with obesity or a BMI ≥ 27 kg/m^2 and at least one weight-related condition.

Incretin-based treatments (e.g., glucagon-like peptide 1 agonists) are generally preferred based on their efficacy. Otherwise, medication selection is based on the patient's comorbid conditions, dosage formulation preferences (i.e., oral vs. injectable administration) and cost. Antiobesity medications are used long-term for weight maintenance, with the exception of single-agent stimulants (e.g., phentermine), which are recommended for short-term use only. Pregnancy is a contraindication to use of any antiobesity medication.

Antiobesity medications should be discontinued if they do not produce at least a 5% weight loss after ~12 weeks.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Glucagon-Like Peptide 1 (GLP-1) Agonists: decrease gastric emptying, which ↑ satiety		**BOXED WARNING** Risk of thyroid C-cell carcinomas (in animal studies; risk to humans unknown) **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Personal or family history of medullary thyroid carcinoma (MTC), patients with Multiple Endocrine Neoplasia syndrome type 2 (MEN 2) **WARNINGS** Pancreatitis, acute kidney injury, gallbladder disease Use with caution in patients with severe GI disease, including gastroparesis (has not been studied) Increased risk of pulmonary aspiration (due to delayed gastric emptying) during general anesthesia/deep sedation **SIDE EFFECTS** Nausea (primary side effect), vomiting, diarrhea, constipation, hypoglycemia, injection site reactions **NOTES** May need to ↓ insulin or sulfonylurea/meglitinide doses to ↓ risk of hypoglycemia Can ↓ the absorption of orally administered drugs due to ↓ gastric emptying; use caution with narrow therapeutic index drugs or drugs that require threshold concentrations for efficacy (e.g., antibiotics, oral contraceptives); see the Diabetes chapter
Liraglutide *(Saxenda)* Injection ***Victoza*** – for diabetes	0.6 mg SC daily × 1 week, ↑ weekly by 0.6 mg SC daily Target dose: 3 mg SC daily	
Semaglutide *(Wegovy)* Injection ***Ozempic*** and *Rybelsus* – for diabetes	0.25 mg SC weekly × 4 weeks, ↑ every 4 weeks Target dose: 2.4 mg SC weekly	
Dual GLP-1 and Glucose-Dependent Insulinotropic Polypeptide (GIP) Agonist: decreases gastric emptying, which ↑ satiety		
Tirzepatide *(Zepbound)* Injection *Mounjaro* – for diabetes	2.5 mg SC weekly × 4 weeks, then ↑ to 5 mg SC weekly If needed, can ↑ to 15 mg SC weekly	
Phentermine: sympathomimetic (stimulant); norepinephrine release stimulates the satiety center to ↓ appetite **Topiramate: multiple mechanisms (including ↑ GABA and glutamate receptor blockade) ↑ satiety and ↓ appetite**		
Phentermine/ Topiramate ER *(Qsymia)* C-IV	Start: 3.75 mg/23 mg PO QAM × 14 days; titrate up based on weight loss Max dose: 15 mg/ 92 mg PO QAM CrCl < 50 mL/min: max dose is 7.5 mg/46 mg daily	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Glaucoma, hyperthyroidism, MAO inhibitor use within past 14 days **SIDE EFFECTS** Tachycardia, CNS effects [e.g., insomnia (take in the morning to ↓ risk), depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts, headache, paresthesias], vision problems, constipation, dry mouth, ↓ HCO_3, upper respiratory tract infection, ↑ SCr **NOTES** Taper off due to seizure risk (from abrupt discontinuation of topiramate) REMS drug due to teratogenic risk; pregnancy test needed before treatment and monthly thereafter; use effective contraception during treatment

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Naltrexone: ↓ food cravings **Bupropion: ↓ appetite**		
Naltrexone/Bupropion *(Contrave)*	ER tablet: 8 mg/90 mg Initial: 1 tab PO QAM, titrate weekly as tolerated Max dose: 2 tabs BID Do not cut, chew or crush; swallow whole Fatty food increases drug levels; do not take with high-fat meal	**BOXED WARNING** Not approved for treatment of major depressive disorder (MDD) or psychiatric disorders; antidepressants (bupropion) can increase the risk of suicidal thinking and behavior in children, adolescents and young adults; not approved for use in pediatric patients **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Chronic opioid use or acute opiate withdrawal, uncontrolled hypertension, seizure disorder, use of other bupropion-containing products, bulimia/anorexia, abrupt discontinuation of alcohol, benzodiazepines, barbiturates, or antiseizure medications, use of MAO inhibitors within 14 days **WARNINGS** Use caution with psychiatric disorders, can ↑ HR and BP **SIDE EFFECTS** Dry mouth, insomnia, N/V, constipation, dizziness **NOTES** Naltrexone blocks opioids and buprenorphine, which reverses analgesia and can induce withdrawal; discontinue opioids or buprenorphine 7-14 days prior to use of *Contrave*
Lipase Inhibitor: ↓ absorption of dietary fats by ~30%		
Orlistat Rx – ***Xenical*** OTC – ***Alli*** Generally used last-line based on efficacy and tolerability	*Xenical:* 120 mg PO with each meal containing fat; take with meal or up to 1 hr after eating *Alli:* 60 mg PO with each meal containing fat Must be used with a low-fat diet plan (max 30% of kcals from fat)	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Chronic malabsorption syndrome, cholestasis **WARNINGS** Liver damage (rare), cholelithiasis, ↑ urinary oxalate/kidney stones, hypoglycemia (in patients with diabetes) **SIDE EFFECTS** GI (flatus with discharge, fatty stool, fecal urgency) **NOTES** Take multivitamin with A, D, E, K and beta-carotene at bedtime or separated by ≥ 2 hours; do not use with cyclosporine or separate by ≥ 3 hours; separate levothyroxine by ≥ 4 hours
Appetite Suppressants: sympathomimetics (stimulants), norepinephrine release stimulates the satiety center, which ↓ appetite		
Phentermine ***(Adipex-P,*** *Lomaira)* C-IV Others: Diethylpropion (C-IV) Phendimetrazine (C-III) Benzphetamine (C-III)	15-37.5 mg PO daily, before or after breakfast, or in divided doses Used short-term, up to 12 weeks, to "jump-start" a diet	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Cardiovascular disease (e.g., uncontrolled hypertension, arrhythmias, heart failure, CAD), hyperthyroidism, glaucoma, history of drug abuse, MAO inhibitors within the past 14 days **SIDE EFFECTS** Tachycardia, ↑ BP, pulmonary hypertension (use > 3 months), insomnia, dizziness, tremor, psychosis **MONITORING** HR, BP, symptoms of pulmonary hypertension (e.g., dyspnea) **NOTES** Potential for misuse/dependence

BARIATRIC SURGERY

Bariatric surgery is considered for adults with:

- BMI ≥ 35 kg/m^2
- BMI ≥ 30 kg/m^2 and type 2 diabetes or unable to achieve or sustain a goal BMI with other methods

Traditional bariatric surgery restricts food intake; this leads to weight loss but is associated with other common issues (described next).

COMMON NUTRIENT DEFICIENCIES

- Calcium is mostly absorbed in the duodenum, which may be bypassed. Calcium citrate supplementation is preferred as it has acid-independent absorption.
- Anemia can result from vitamin B12 and iron deficiency; both may require supplementation.
- Patients may require life-long supplementation of the fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E and K due to fat malabsorption.

MEDICATION CONCERNS

- Medications may require dose adjustment or may need to be crushed and put in liquid or used in transdermal form for up to two months post-surgery.
- Rapid weight loss can cause gallstones. Ursodiol dissolves gallstones and may be needed, unless the gallbladder has been removed.

KEY COUNSELING POINTS

See the Drug Formulations and Patient Counseling chapter for counseling language/layman's terminology.

GLP-1 AGONISTS AND GLP-1/GIP AGONISTS

- Subcutaneous injection (see Diabetes chapter for details).
- Can cause:
  - ☐ Nausea, vomiting and diarrhea (can lead to dehydration).
  - ☐ Pancreatitis and gallbladder disease.
  - ☐ Hypoglycemia.
- Can cause stomach issues (e.g., fatty/oily stool, intestinal gas with discharge, a need to have a bowel movement right away, an increased number of bowel movements or poor bowel control).

PHENTERMINE/TOPIRAMATE

- Take this medication in the morning to avoid insomnia.
- Phentermine can cause increased heart rate.

NALTREXONE/BUPROPION

- Do not take with opioids or with a history of seizures.
- Can cause increased blood pressure.

ORLISTAT

- Take one capsule at each main meal, or up to one hour after a meal that contains fat.
- Eat a healthy diet that is low in fat in order to reduce GI side effects.

APPETITE SUPPRESSANTS

- Can cause:
  - ☐ Increased blood pressure.
  - ☐ Increased heart rate.

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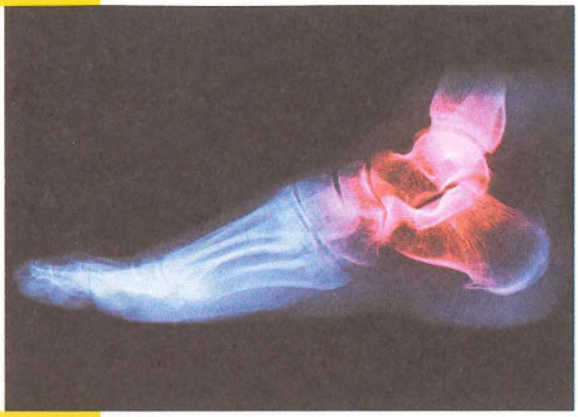
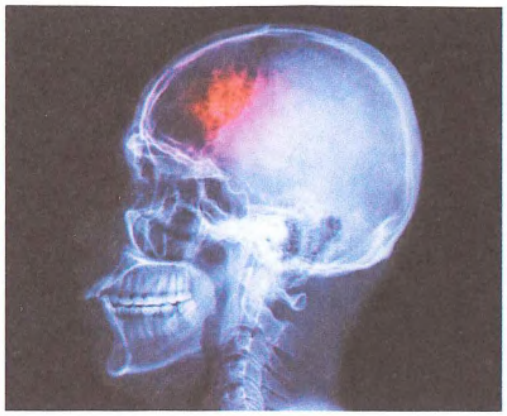
PAIN/RELATED CONDITIONS

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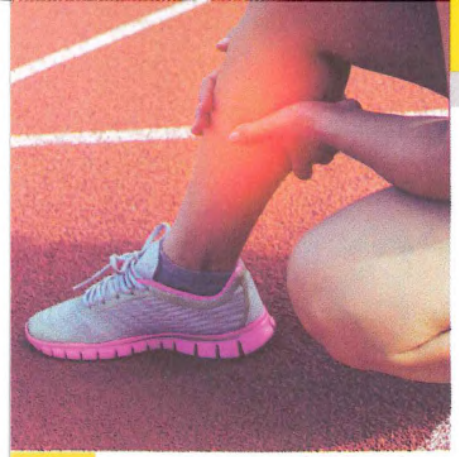

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CHAPTER 58

PAIN

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= Study Tip Gal

BACKGROUND

Pain can be defined as an unpleasant experience and physical suffering caused by an illness or injury. Pain can significantly decrease quality of life and the ability to carry out daily tasks. It is a common reason for adults to seek medical care in the United States; approximately one in five adults have chronic pain.

PATHOPHYSIOLOGY

Pain is classified into two main categories (nociceptive pain and neuropathic pain) based on the underlying cause of the pain. Nociceptive pain can result from injury to internal organs (visceral pain) or from injury to the skin, muscles, bones, joints or ligaments (musculoskeletal or somatic pain). The resulting tissue damage causes the release of substances [e.g., prostaglandins (PGs), substance P, histamine] that cause nociceptors (sensory nerves) to send impulses to the brain, resulting in the feeling of pain.

Neuropathic pain does not result from tissue injury; it is caused by damage to, or malfunction of, the nervous system. Examples of neuropathic pain conditions include fibromyalgia, diabetic neuropathy, chronic headaches and certain drug-induced neuropathies (e.g., caused by vinca alkaloids).

ACUTE AND CHRONIC PAIN

Acute pain begins suddenly and usually feels sharp. It is typically nociceptive in nature, such as pain caused by a fracture, burn, acute illness, surgery or childbirth. The pain can last just a few moments or longer, and usually goes away when the cause of the pain has resolved.

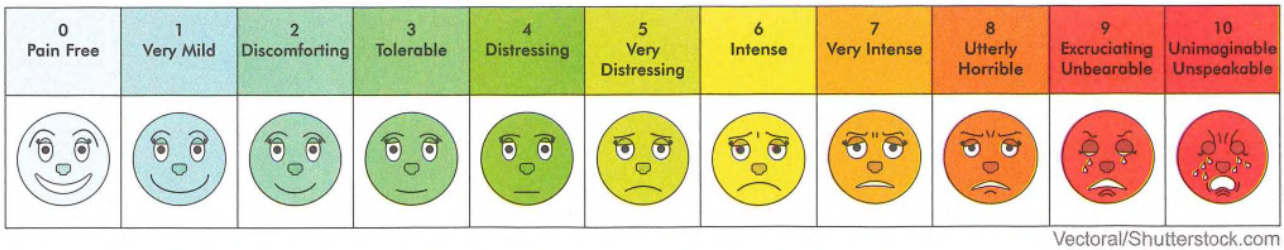
Acute pain can cause anxiety and physical symptoms, including sweating and tachycardia. If left untreated, acute pain can increase the risk for development of chronic pain.

Chronic pain is defined as pain that persists for three months or longer. A visible injury (such as a crushed lumbar vertebrae that causes lower back pain) may be present or no visible injury may be present, such as with osteoarthritis or diabetic neuropathy. Chronic pain is subdivided into cancer pain or chronic non-cancer pain, with each having separate treatment guidelines. Poorly managed chronic pain can cause depression and physical symptoms (e.g., fatigue, muscle tension).

TREATMENT PRINCIPLES

Pain is subjective; it is measured by the patient's own description, along with observations. Patients with chronic pain should be taught to monitor and document their pain by recording the pain level, the sensation or quality (e.g., burning, shooting, stabbing, aching), anything that worsens or lessens the pain and the time of day the pain improves or worsens. This helps to evaluate pain control and provides guidance on pain medication changes.

Pain scales are useful to assess pain severity and intensity. Pain is commonly rated using a numeric scale (0 = no pain, 10 = worst pain) or with the visual analog scale (see figure below). The Joint Commission (TJC) standards require that pain be assessed and managed while patients are hospitalized. Hospitals must inquire about, assess, treat and re-assess pain in a timely manner using non-pharmacologic and/or pharmacologic treatments. Pain scales are also used during outpatient clinic visits to evaluate new pain and to track changes in pain control over time.



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SELECTING AN ANALGESIC REGIMEN

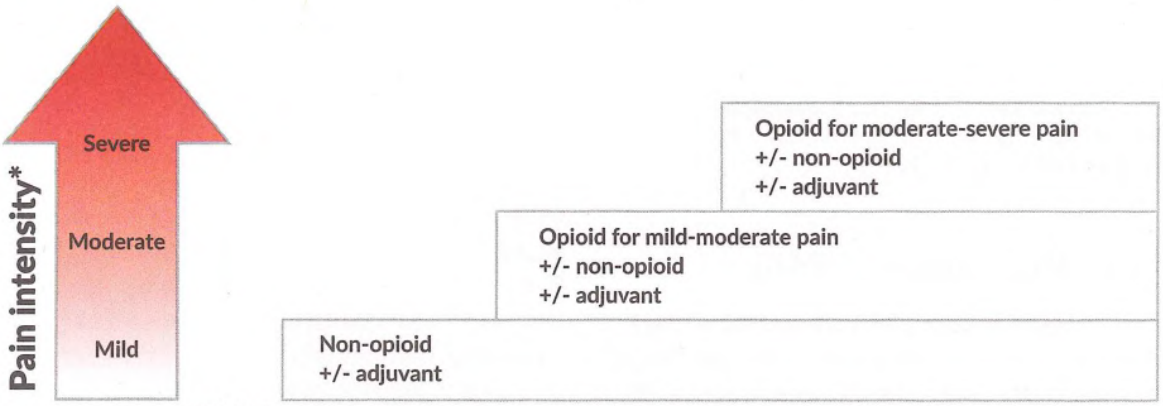
Pain can be treated using a stepwise approach, where the choice of drug depends on the patient's self-reported pain severity. When initially using any class of analgesic (including opioids), start low and titrate to the lowest effective dose that adequately reduces the pain without causing intolerable adverse effects. Using medications with multiple mechanisms of action (i.e., multimodal pain control) often produces improved pain control via additive or synergistic effects.

Non-opioid analgesics [e.g., acetaminophen, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs)] are most commonly used for mild pain (acute or chronic). They can also be added to an opioid-based regimen to reduce the total opioid dose required and to provide better pain relief. Suzetrigine *(Journavx)* is a novel non-opioid analgesic approved for moderate to severe acute pain; it may be an alternative option to opioids in select patients, but its place in therapy is not yet defined.

Opioids are most appropriate for moderate to severe acute and chronic pain. Opioid use should be limited, as able, due to risks of abuse and dependence.

Adjuvant treatments [e.g., antidepressants, antiseizure medications (ASMs), muscle relaxants] are typically added to the primary pain treatment (i.e., non-opioid or opioid-containing regimen). However, they may be preferred as the primary treatment in certain conditions (e.g., tricyclic antidepressants for fibromyalgia). Adjuvant treatments should be considered for any pain type and are especially beneficial for neuropathic pain.

If pain is not controlled after taking these steps, invasive or minimally invasive interventions (e.g., intrathecal drug administration) may be tried.



**Pain is classified as "mild" if 1-3 on the numeric scale, "moderate" if 4-6 on the numeric scale, and "severe" if 7-10 on the scale.*

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NON-OPIOID ANALGESICS

ACETAMINOPHEN

Acetaminophen reduces pain and fever (i.e., it is an antipyretic) but does not provide an anti-inflammatory effect. The mechanism of action is not well defined but is thought to involve inhibition of PG synthesis in the central nervous system (CNS), resulting in reduced pain impulse generation.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/ MONITORING
Acetaminophen ***(Tylenol, FeverAll,*** most "Non-Aspirin" pain relievers) Tablet/caplet, chewable tablet, ODT, suspension, suppository, injection ***FeverAll:*** rectal suppository Rx and OTC **+ hydrocodone** **+ oxycodone *(Endocet, Percocet)*** **+ codeine** + tramadol **+ caffeine *(Excedrin Tension Headache)*** **+ aspirin/caffeine *(Excedrin Extra Strength, Excedrin Migraine,*** *Goody's Powder)* **+ caffeine/pyrilamine *(Midol Complete)*** + butalbital/caffeine *(Fioricet)* +/– codeine + diphenhydramine *(Tylenol PM Extra Strength)* + ibuprofen *(Advil Dual Action)* Available in multiple cough & cold products and OTC combinations	**Adults** Maximum ≤ 4,000 mg/day from all sources Prescription combinations: maximum of 325 mg per dosing unit Dosing ranges and maximum doses depend on the formulation **Pediatrics (< 12 years)** 10-15 mg/kg Q4-6H Max: 5 doses/day OTC: use weight- and age-based dosing table on label Infant and children's suspension: use dosing syringe or dosing cup; all products contain 160 mg/5 mL	**BOXED WARNINGS** Severe hepatotoxicity (can require liver transplant or result in death) associated with doses > 4 grams/day or use of multiple acetaminophen-containing products (see Study Tip Gal below for treatment of overdose) Risk of 10-fold dosing errors with injection **WARNINGS** Severe skin reactions, rare SJS, TEN Renal impairment: use cautiously **SIDE EFFECTS** Generally well-tolerated with oral forms **NOTES** Avoid using "APAP" abbreviation **Injection** Concentration is 10 mg/mL (50-100 mL containers); use caution with dosing Should always be ordered in mg, not mL

ACETAMINOPHEN DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Acetaminophen can be used with warfarin, but if used chronically (doses > 2 grams/day), it can increase the INR.
- Avoid or limit alcohol use due to the risk of hepatotoxicity.

ACETAMINOPHEN OVERDOSE

The antidote is N-acetylcysteine (NAC).

- Glutathione precursor (↑ glutathione).
- Administered IV or PO (using the injectable or inhalation solution).

The Rumack-Matthew nomogram uses the serum acetaminophen level and time since ingestion to assess the risk of hepatotoxicity and need for NAC.

NON-STEROIDAL ANTI-INFLAMMATORY DRUGS

NSAIDs inhibit cyclooxygenase (COX) enzymes, which catalyze the conversion of arachidonic acid to PGs. There are two types of COX enzymes:

- COX-1 produces PGs that protect the gastric mucosa. Additionally, COX-1 converts arachidonic acid to thromboxane A2 (TxA2), which promotes platelet activation and aggregation.
- COX-2 produces PGs that mediate pain, fever and inflammation.

NSAIDs include non-selective drugs (e.g., ibuprofen, aspirin), which block both COX-1 and COX-2 enzymes, and selective COX-2 inhibitors. All NSAIDs block COX-2 and decrease pain, fever, and inflammation, and all have cardiovascular (CV) and GI risk (see boxed warnings below). However, because selective COX-2 inhibitors do not inhibit gastric PGs and TxA2 production, they have a lower GI risk and a higher CV risk.

Aspirin is an irreversible inhibitor of COX-1 and 2 and an antiplatelet agent with CV benefit (i.e., cardioprotection).

NON-ASPIRIN BOXED WARNINGS

All prescription non-aspirin NSAIDs require dispensing with a MedGuide due to the risks listed below.

- GI risk: there is an ↑ risk of serious GI adverse events (e.g., bleeding, ulceration). Older adults, those with a history of GI bleed or those taking anticoagulants, systemic steroids, SSRIs or SNRIs are at greater risk. Aspirin also carries this risk.
  - A PPI may be used for GI protection in patients taking chronic NSAIDs, but the PPI risks (↓ bone density, ↑ infection) should be considered.
- CV risk: there is an ↑ risk of MI and stroke. Avoid in patients with CV disease or risk factors.
- Coronary artery bypass graft (CABG) surgery: use is contraindicated after surgery. Antiplatelet therapy (typically aspirin) is recommended.

SIDE EFFECTS OF ALL NSAIDs

- Decreased renal function via afferent arteriole vasoconstriction, which reduces glomerular blood flow; concomitant use of other nephrotoxic drugs or dehydration increases this risk. All NSAIDs should be used cautiously (or avoided) in renal failure.
- ↑ blood pressure. Use cautiously in controlled hypertension; avoid in uncontrolled hypertension.
- Nausea, especially salicylates. Minimize by taking with food, or switching to an enteric-coated or buffered product or a different NSAID.
- Photosensitivity. Avoid the sun during midday hours, use sun-protective clothing and broad-spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of at least 30.
- Rare, but serious, renal impairment in a fetus if used ≥ 20 weeks gestation in pregnancy.
- Premature closure of the ductus arteriosus, which can lead to heart failure in a fetus. Limit NSAID use during pregnancy and do not use during the third trimester (≥ 30 weeks gestation) when the risk is highest (see the Study Tip Gal below).

NSAIDs AND THE DUCTUS ARTERIOSUS

Before birth, the ductus arteriosus (DA) connects the fetal pulmonary artery to the aorta, allowing blood (oxygenated via the placenta) to bypass the underdeveloped lungs and flow to the fetal systemic circulation.

Do not use NSAIDs in the third trimester of pregnancy. NSAIDs can prematurely close the DA.

After birth, the DA should close on its own. In some cases, it remains patent (open).

IV NSAIDs (indomethacin, ibuprofen) can be used within 14 days after birth to close a patent ductus arteriosus (PDA).

NON-ASPIRIN NSAIDs

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
COX-1 and COX-2 Non-Selective		
Ibuprofen *(Advil, Motrin IB, Caldolor, NeoProfen)* Tablet, capsule, chewable tablet, suspension, injection Rx and OTC	**Adults** OTC: 200-400 mg Q4-6H Max: 1.2 grams/day Rx: 400-800 mg Q6-8H Max: 3.2 grams/day **Pediatrics** 5-10 mg/kg/dose Q6-8H Max: 40 mg/kg/day	**SIDE EFFECTS** All NSAIDs: dyspepsia, abdominal pain, nausea **NOTES** *NeoProfen:* indicated for PDA closure in premature infant OTC: limit self-treatment to < 10 days Severe skin reactions, including SJS/TEN
Indomethacin *(Indocin)* Capsule, suspension, suppository, injection	IR: 25-50 mg BID-TID CR: 75 mg daily-BID	**NOTES** High risk for CNS side effects (avoid in psych conditions) The IR formulation is an older NSAID approved for gout IV injection is indicated for PDA closure in premature infant
Naproxen *(Aleve, Naprelan, Naprosyn)* Tablet, capsule, suspension Rx and OTC + sumatriptan *(Treximet)* **+ esomeprazole *(Vimovo)***	Doses below expressed as naproxen base OTC: 200 mg Q8-12H Max: 600 mg/day Rx: 500 mg Q12H or 250 mg Q6-8H Max: 1,000 mg/day	**NOTES** Prescribers and patients may prefer naproxen since it can be dosed BID Naproxen base 200 mg = naproxen Na 220 mg PPI in *Vimovo* is used to protect the GI tract In OTC combos with diphenhydramine and pseudoephedrine
Ketorolac *(Acular, Sprix)* Tablet, injection, nasal spray, ophthalmic *Acular:* ophthalmic *Sprix:* nasal spray	Oral: 10-20 mg × 1, then 10 mg Q4-6H PRN (max: 40 mg/day) IV (≥ 50 kg): 30 mg × 1 or 30 mg Q6H IM (≥ 50 kg): 60 mg × 1 or 30 mg Q6H Nasal spray: < 65 yrs and ≥ 50 kg: 1 spray in each nostril Q6-8H ≥ 65 yrs or < 50 kg: 1 spray in one nostril Q6-8H	**BOXED WARNINGS** Max combined duration (all formulations) is 5 days Oral ketorolac: for short-term moderate to severe acute pain only as a continuation of IV or IM ketorolac Adjust dose if ≥ 65 yrs or < 50 kg **WARNINGS** ↑ bleeding, renal and liver failure, anaphylactic shock **SIDE EFFECTS** Headache, injection site pain **NOTES** Nasal spray: prime five times before use; no additional priming is needed; discard 24 hours after opening
Piroxicam *(Feldene)*	10-20 mg daily	**NOTES** ↑ risk for GI toxicity and severe skin reactions (SJS/TEN); may require GI protection (e.g., PPI, misoprostol)
Sulindac	150-200 mg BID	**NOTES** Sometimes used with reduced renal function, and in patients on lithium who require an NSAID
Increased COX-2 Selectivity		
Celecoxib *(Celebrex)* Capsule, oral solution	100-200 mg BID	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Sulfonamide allergy (not likely to cross-react, see Drug Allergies & Adverse Drug Reactions chapter) **NOTES** Highest COX-2 selectivity Severe skin reactions, including SJS/TEN

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Diclofenac *(Cambia, Lofena, Zipsor)* Tablet, capsule, packet Rx ***Voltaren**, Aspercreme* *Arthritis:* gel OTC *Flector, Licart:* patch Rx **+ misoprostol *(Arthrotec)*** Rx	Tablets: 50-75 mg BID-TID Gel: 2-4 g to affected joint four times per day (max 32 grams/day) Patch: apply to most painful area daily or BID (frequency varies by brand) Packet: mix in water	**BOXED WARNINGS** *Arthrotec:* avoid in females of childbearing potential unless effective contraceptive measures are used **SIDE EFFECTS** Topical: occasional application site reactions (rash/pruritus) **NOTES** Some COX-2 selectivity Oral diclofenac formulations are not bioequivalent Misoprostol is used to replace the gut-protective PGs and ↓ GI risk; can ↑ uterine contractions (and terminate pregnancy); causes cramping, diarrhea Remove *Flector* patch before an MRI
Meloxicam *(Mobic*)* Tablet, capsule, ODT, oral suspension	7.5-15 mg once daily	**NOTES** Some COX-2 selectivity Meloxicam capsules and ODT are not interchangeable with other formulations
Etodolac Tablet, capsule, ER tablet	300-500 mg Q6-8H	
Nabumetone Tablet	1,000-2,000 mg daily (can be divided BID)	

**Brand discontinued but name still used in practice.*

SALICYLATE NSAIDs

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/ MONITORING
Aspirin/Acetylsalicylic Acid *(Ascriptin, Bufferin, Ecotrin, Vazalore)* Tablet, caplet, chewable tablet, liquid-filled capsule, suppository ***Ascriptin, Bufferin, Ecotrin:*** EC/buffered Rx and OTC **+ acetaminophen/caffeine *(Excedrin, Excedrin Migraine,** Goody's Powder)* + antacid *(Alka-Seltzer)* + dipyridamole – for stroke In many other OTC combinations	Cardioprotection: 81-162 mg daily Analgesic dosing: 325-650 mg Q4-6H *Goody's Powder:* 520 mg per packet	**WARNINGS** Avoid with NSAID hypersensitivity, nasal polyps, asthma Avoid aspirin in children and teenagers with any viral infection due to potential Reye's syndrome (symptoms include somnolence, N/V, lethargy, confusion) Rare severe skin rash, SJS/TEN **SIDE EFFECTS** Dyspepsia, bleeding, nausea **NOTES** To ↓ nausea, use EC/buffered product or take with food Tinnitus with salicylate overdose Methyl salicylate is an OTC topical in *BenGay, IcyHot, Thera-Gesic, Salonpas*; see Topical Adjuvants at the end of the chapter
Non-Acetylated Salicylates		
Salsalate	≤ 3 grams/day, divided BID-TID	
Magnesium Salicylate *(Doan's Extra Strength)*	580 mg ES tab: 2 tablets Q6H; max 8 tablets/day	
Choline Magnesium Trisalicylate	1 gram BID-TID or 3 grams QHS	
Diflunisal	500 mg BID-TID	

NSAID DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Additive bleeding risk with other drugs that can ↑ bleeding (e.g., SSRIs, SNRIs). See the Drug Interactions chapter.
- Caution using aspirin with other ototoxic agents (e.g., aminoglycosides, IV loop diuretics).
- Multiple NSAIDs should not be used together, except the addition of low dose aspirin for cardioprotection when indicated. If using aspirin for cardioprotection and ibuprofen for pain, take aspirin one hour before or eight hours after ibuprofen.
- NSAIDs can ↕ the levels of lithium and methotrexate.

OPIOID ANALGESICS

Opioid drugs interact in a variety of ways with the three primary types of opioid receptors: μ (mu), κ (kappa) and δ (delta). Opioids are mu receptor agonists within the CNS; this action results in pain relief, but can also cause euphoria and respiratory depression.

Buprenorphine is a partial mu-opioid agonist. It is an agonist at low doses and an antagonist at higher doses. Buprenorphine is used in lower doses to treat pain and higher doses to treat opioid use disorder.

SAFETY CONCERNS

All opioids have several boxed warnings (see Study Tip Gal below) and require a Risk Evaluation and Mitigation Strategy (REMS), which includes education requirements for both healthcare providers and patients.

Important patient education includes management of adverse effects (e.g., constipation), recognition and management of overdose (e.g., naloxone use), strategies to decrease the risk of overdose (e.g., avoid concurrent CNS depressants) and proper disposal (e.g., drug take-back programs, such as prepaid drug mail-back envelopes and on-site drop-off boxes).

OPIOID BOXED WARNINGS

- Addiction, abuse and misuse can lead to overdose and death.
- Respiratory depression, which can be fatal.
- Use of any opioid with benzodiazepines or other CNS depressants, including alcohol, can increase the risk of respiratory depression and death.
- Morphine ER capsules, *Nucynta ER,* oxymorphone ER and hydrocodone ER capsules: do not consume alcohol with this medication. Alcohol can cause increased drug plasma levels, which can lead to a potentially fatal overdose.
- Accidental ingestion/exposure of even one dose in children can be fatal. Never give this drug to anyone else.
- Crushing, dissolving or chewing the long-acting products can cause delivery of a potentially fatal dose.
- Life-threatening neonatal opioid withdrawal can occur with prolonged use during pregnancy.

TERMINOLOGY

TERM	DEFINITION
Physical Dependence	Almost all patients using chronic opioids, including those abusing opioids, become physiologically adapted to the opioid and experience physical withdrawal symptoms when the opioid is stopped or a dose is late or missed. The symptoms include anxiety, tachycardia, shakiness and shortness of breath. Physical dependence is not addiction.
Addiction	A desire or compulsion to take the drug despite harm. Involves drug-seeking behavior (e.g., exaggerating pain, forging or obtaining prescriptions from multiple providers).

TERM	DEFINITION
Opioid Use Disorder (OUD)	A problematic pattern of opioid use that causes significant impairment or distress. Specific criteria must be met for a diagnosis of OUD, including unsuccessful trials to reduce or control use or use causing failure to fulfill obligations at work, school or home.
Tolerance	A higher opioid dose is needed to produce the same level of analgesia that a lower dose previously provided. Tolerance develops with chronic opioid use. It is important to distinguish if the increased pain is due to a condition (e.g., cancer that has spread), a decrease in the drug's effectiveness due to tolerance, or both. If tolerance develops, it may be preferable to switch to another opioid rather than increase the dose.
Opioid Hyperalgesia	When the opioid dose is increased to treat the pain, but the pain becomes worse rather than better. This occurs occasionally. If suspected, a different class of analgesic or a switch to another opioid should be tried.
Break-Through Pain [(BTP), end of dose pain]	Sharp spikes of severe pain that occur despite the use of a long-acting (ER) opioid. Must be treated with a short-acting [immediate-release (IR)] opioid. When multiple IR doses are required for BTP, a higher dose of the scheduled long-acting opioid or a switch to a different opioid may be required. BTP medication should be prescribed with scheduled, long-acting opioid treatment.
Opioid-Induced Respiratory Depression (OIRD)	The body's natural drive to breathe is suppressed. The usual cause of fatality in opioid overdose. Hospitalized patients receiving IV opioids must have oxygen saturation and level of sedation carefully monitored.
Centrally-Acting Opioid Antagonists	Block opioids from binding to opioid receptors. Examples include naloxone (for OIRD) and naltrexone (for OUD).

COMMON OPIOIDS

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
ALL OPIOIDS C-II (except where noted otherwise) In addition to general opioid boxed warnings (see Study Tip Gal on previous page), adverse effects include constipation, nausea/vomiting (especially with acute, high-doses), somnolence, dizziness/lightheadedness and seizures. Pruritus is common, especially in opioid-naïve patients/with morphine use; diphenhydramine can be used to ↓ rash and itch.		
Codeine C-II (single-entity tablets) **+ acetaminophen** C-III (tablet/capsule combination products) C-V (oral solution combination products (e.g., cough syrups) + chlorpheniramine/ pseudoephedrine + promethazine + promethazine/ phenylephrine	15-60 mg Q4H PRN Acetaminophen combinations: Codeine 15 mg + acetaminophen 300 mg Codeine 30 mg + acetaminophen 300 mg Codeine 60 mg + acetaminophen 300 mg	**BOXED WARNINGS** Respiratory depression and death have occurred in children who were found to be ultra-rapid metabolizers of codeine (due to a CYP450 2D6 polymorphism) after tonsillectomy and/or adenoidectomy; use with CYP3A4 inducers/inhibitors or CYP2D6 inhibitors should be carefully considered due to variable effects **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Do not use in children age < 12 yrs (any indication) and age < 18 yrs following tonsillectomy/adenoidectomy surgery; FDA recommends avoid codeine-containing cough and cold products for children age < 18 yrs **NOTES** Codeine, a prodrug, is metabolized to morphine via CYP2D6; deaths have occurred in nursing infants after exposure to high concentrations of morphine because the mother was an ultra-rapid metabolizer

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Fentanyl *(Sublimaze*, others) Injection, patch, oral transmucosal lozenge on a stick ("lollipop"), buccal tablet Similar drugs (IV): alfentanil *(Alfenta)*, remifentanil *(Ultiva)*, sufentanil	**Patch** Apply 1 patch Q72H (can be Q48H) Available in different strengths ranging from 12-100 mcg/hr 12 mcg patch delivers 12.5 mcg/hr **Lozenge** Start with 200 mcg, can titrate to 4 BTP episodes/day **Injection** Short t½ when given IV (boluses Q1-2H); continuous IV or PCA are used	**BOXED WARNINGS** Potential for medication errors when converting between dosage forms, use with strong or moderate CYP3A4 inhibitors can cause ↑ effects and fatal respiratory depression, do not expose transdermal patch to external heat **SIDE EFFECTS** Hyperhidrosis (excessive sweating), dry mouth, asthenia, loss of appetite, application site redness/erythema (patch) **NOTES** Outpatient use of fentanyl is for chronic pain management only Risk of serotonin syndrome when used with other serotonergic drugs Patch and lozenge: not used in opioid-naïve patients; a patient taking the equivalent of morphine 60 mg/day or more for at least 7 days can be converted to a fentanyl patch Lozenge: cut off stick and flush unused/unneeded doses Transmucosal immediate-release fentanyl (e.g., lozenge, buccal tabs): for cancer BTP; REMS program requires documentation of patient's opioid tolerance with each prescription **Fentanyl Patch** Analgesic effect can be seen 8-16 hrs after application; discontinue all around-the-clock opioid drugs when the patch is applied Do not apply > 1 patch at a time unless instructed; apply to hairless skin (cut hair short if necessary) Do not cover with a heating pad; cover only with permitted adhesive dressings *Bioclusive* or *Tegaderm* Some patches need to be removed before an MRI (specific to each formulation and manufacturer); check the individual package insert Dispose of patch by folding sticky sides together and flushing down the toilet; keep away from children & pets
Buprenorphine C-III For pain management: ***Belbuca:*** buccal film ***Butrans:*** patch Injection Used for treatment of pain and opioid use disorder	**Buccal film:** 75 mcg daily or Q12H Insert between gum and cheek tissue (must be wet from saliva or water); do not eat or drink for 30 minutes **Butrans Patch** 5 mcg/hr patch weekly Apply to chest, upper outer arm or upper back; do not use the same site for 3 weeks	**WARNINGS** *Butrans:* QT prolongation (do not exceed one 20 mcg/hr patch at a time) Severe dental adverse events with buccal formulations **SIDE EFFECTS** Patch: application site reactions (pruritus/erythema/rash), dry mouth **NOTES** *Butrans*: can only be covered with *Bioclusive* or *Tegaderm* (adhesive coverings); do not expose to heat; to dispose, fold sticky sides together and flush down the toilet or put in disposal unit included in packaging

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Hydrocodone IR (combination products only) Select combo products: **+ acetaminophen** + chlorpheniramine + chlorpheniramine/ pseudoephedrine + homatropine *(Hycodan, Hydromet)*	2.5, 5, 7.5, 10 mg hydrocodone + 325 mg acetaminophen Usual starting dose: 5/325 mg Q4-6H PRN	**BOXED WARNINGS** Initiation of CYP3A4 inhibitors (or stopping CYP3A4 inducers) can cause fatal overdose **WARNINGS** Caution in CYP2D6 poor metabolizers **SIDE EFFECTS** Dry mouth **NOTES** Do not use hydrocodone cough and cold preparations in age < 18 years
Hydrocodone ER *(Hysingla ER)* Tablet, capsule	Capsule: start 10 mg Q12H Tablet: start 20 mg Q24H	**BOXED WARNINGS** Initiation of CYP3A4 inhibitors (or stopping CYP3A4 inducers) can cause fatal overdose **NOTES** Substrate of CYP3A4 (major) and CYP2D6 (minor) Preferably avoid use if breastfeeding Available in abuse-deterrent formulations QT prolongation has occurred at doses > 160 mg/day
Hydromorphone *(Dilaudid)* Tablet, ER tablet injection, solution, suppository	Starting dose: Oral: 2-4 mg Q4-6H PRN IV: 0.2-1 mg Q2-4H PRN	**BOXED WARNINGS** Risk of medication error with high potency (HP) injection (use in opioid-tolerant patients only); HP injection (10 mg/mL) is more concentrated than standard hydromorphone (e.g., 1 mg/mL, 2 mg/mL) **SIDE EFFECTS** Dry mouth, hyperhidrosis **NOTES** Potent: start low, convert carefully; high risk for overdose ER tablet: contraindicated in opioid-naïve patients Two-week washout required between hydromorphone and MAO inhibitors
Methadone *(Methadose, Methadone Intensol)* Tablet, soluble tablet, solution, oral concentrate Used for treatment of pain and for detox and maintenance treatment of opioid use disorder	Initial: 2.5-10 mg Q8-12H	**BOXED WARNINGS** Life-threatening QT prolongation and serious arrhythmias (e.g., torsades de pointes) have occurred during treatment (most involve large, multiple daily doses); should be prescribed by professionals who know requirements for safe use; initiation of CYP450 inhibitors (or stopping inducers) can cause fatal overdose **WARNINGS** Combination with other serotonergic drugs or MAO inhibitors can ↑ risk of serotonin syndrome (methadone also blocks reuptake of norepinephrine) **SIDE EFFECTS** Hyperhidrosis **NOTES** Due to variable half-life, methadone is hard to dose safely Can ↓ testosterone and contribute to sexual dysfunction Methadone is a major CYP3A4 substrate; avoid use with CYP3A4 inhibitors or ↓ the methadone dose

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Meperidine *(Demerol)* Tablet, solution, injection Used off-label for post-operative rigors (shivering)	Oral/IM/SC: 50-150 mg Q3-4H PRN	**WARNINGS** Normeperidine (metabolite) is renally cleared and can accumulate and cause CNS toxicity, including seizures Serotonergic and can ↑ risk of serotonin syndrome Avoid with or within 2 weeks of MAO inhibitor **SIDE EFFECTS** Hyperhidrosis **NOTES** No longer recommended as an analgesic (especially in older adults and renally-impaired patients); avoid use or use short-term only for acute pain Short duration of action (pain controlled for max 3 hrs)
Morphine ER: ***MS Contin*** Injection: ***Duramorph, Infumorph*** Tablet (IR/ER), suppository, solution, ER capsule, injection	IR (including solution): 10-30 mg Q4H PRN ER: 15, 30, 60, 100, 200 mg Q8-12H IV: 2.5-5 mg Q3-4H PRN Renal impairment: start at a lower dose, or avoid morphine, due to drug accumulation	**BOXED WARNINGS** Medication errors with oral solution (note strength), appropriate staff and equipment needed for intrathecal/epidural administration **SIDE EFFECTS** Pruritus, dry mouth, hyperhidrosis **NOTES** Do not use MSO4 or MS abbreviations for morphine or magnesium Do not crush or chew any ER products; morphine ER capsules can be opened and sprinkled on applesauce or soft food Diphenhydramine or similar can block histamine-induced pruritus
Oxycodone IR: ***Roxicodone,*** *RoxyBond* CR: ***OxyContin*** ER: *Xtampza ER* Tablet (IR/ER), solution, capsule (IR/ER) + acetaminophen ***(Endocet, Percocet)***	IR: 5-20 mg Q4-6H CR: 10-80 mg Q12H (60, 80 mg only for opioid-tolerant patients) Renal impairment: start at a lower dose, or avoid oxycodone, due to drug accumulation	**BOXED WARNINGS** Initiation of CYP3A4 inhibitors (or stopping CYP3A4 inducers) can cause fatal overdose; caution with oxycodone oral solution and oral concentrate (confusion between mg and mL and different concentrations) **SIDE EFFECTS** Pruritus, dry mouth, hyperhidrosis **NOTES** Abuse-deterrent: *OxyContin, RoxyBond, Xtampza ER* *Xtampza ER* capsules can be opened and contents administered with soft food or through a gastric tube
Oxymorphone Tablet (IR/ER), injection	IR (opioid-naïve): 5-10 mg Q4-6H PRN	**NOTES** Do not use with moderate-severe liver impairment; use low doses in older adults, renal or mild liver impairment (due to higher drug concentrations) Take on empty stomach

OPIOID DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Methadone: caution with agents that worsen cardiac function or increase arrhythmia risk, including those with QT prolongation. Caution with other serotonergic agents. Caution with agents that worsen renal function.
- Hydrocodone, fentanyl, methadone and oxycodone are CYP3A4 substrates. Avoid use with CYP3A4 inhibitors. Analgesic effect is decreased with CYP3A4 inducers.

DOSING CONVERSIONS

The correct opioid dose is the lowest dose that provides effective pain relief without intolerable or dangerous adverse effects. Reasons to switch to a different opioid include:

- The dose has been increased or the interval shortened and pain relief is still not adequate
- The side effects are intolerable (patients react differently to different opioids)
- The drug is too costly or not included on formulary
- A different formulation is needed (e.g., PO vs. IV)

For opioid conversions (except methadone), use a ratio conversion (see table below). When converting one opioid to another, round down (do not round up). A patient may develop tolerance or could respond better to one drug over another; rounding the dose down will reduce the risk of overdose.

DRUG	IV/IM (MG)	ORAL (MG)
Morphine	10	30
Hydromorphone	1.5	7.5
Oxycodone	–	20
Hydrocodone	–	30
Codeine	130	200
Fentanyl	0.1	–
Meperidine	75	300
Oxymorphone	1	10

STEPS TO CONVERT

- Calculate the total 24-hour dose of the current drug.
- Use the ratio conversion to calculate the dose of the new drug.
- Calculate the 24-hour dose of the new drug and reduce the dose ≥ 25% for cross-tolerance (if the exam does not specify to reduce, calculate the equivalent dose and do not reduce).
- Divide the new drug's 24-hr dose by the appropriate number of doses per day (per the typical dosing interval).
- Always have BTP medication available while making changes; dosing ranges from 5 – 17% (typically 10 – 15%) of the total daily long-acting opioid dose, typically Q1 – 2H PRN.

BTP medication selection considerations:

- Medication: an IR version of the long-acting opioid is preferred when possible; combination products such as hydrocodone/acetaminophen can be used, but monitor total daily acetaminophen intake from all sources.
- Formulation: injectable (in the inpatient setting) and transmucosal formulations have a faster onset and may be preferred for severe BTP.

CASE SCENARIO

A hospice patient has been receiving 12 mg/day of IV hydromorphone. The pharmacist will convert the hydromorphone to PO morphine ER to be given Q12H. The hospice policy for opioid conversion is to reduce the new dose by 50%, and to use 5 – 17% of the total daily dose for BTP.

The conversion factors (the left side of the ratio conversion) are taken from the table above. The right side of the ratio conversion has the patient's current total daily hydromorphone IV dose in the denominator, and the total daily dose of morphine in the numerator:

$$\frac{30 \text{ mg oral morphine}}{1.5 \text{ mg IV hydromorphone}} = \frac{X \text{ mg oral morphine}}{12 \text{ mg IV hydromorphone}} \qquad X = 240 \text{ mg of oral morphine}$$

Reduce by 50%, as instructed in the case:

50% of 240 mg = 120 mg, the correct dose of morphine ER would be 60 mg BID

Using the BTP range provided by the hospice policy in the example, a dose of morphine IR 15 mg Q1 – 2H as needed for BTP could be used with morphine ER 60 mg BID.

EXCEPTION: FENTANYL PATCHES

Converting to a fentanyl patch is most commonly done using a dosing table provided in the package insert (see Case Scenario below). If converting to fentanyl using the previous table, remember that the total daily dose is in mg and must be converted to mcg (multiply by 1,000); then divide by 24 to get the patch dose (in mcg per hour). No oral dose conversion is listed because fentanyl is not absorbed orally. Some clinicians use this estimation: morphine 60 mg total daily dose = 25 mcg/hr fentanyl patch. These methods can provide different answers. For the exam, follow the specific instructions provided when converting to or from fentanyl patches.

CASE SCENARIO

MJ is a 52-year-old male who has been taking oxycodone CR 40 mg BID and oxycodone/acetaminophen 5/325 mg PRN for BTP. He uses the BTP medication 2 – 3 times weekly. Based on the oxycodone CR dose only, select an appropriate fentanyl patch strength for this patient using the following table:

FENTANYL PATCH CONVERSION

Current Analgesic	Daily Dosage (mg/day)			
Oral morphine	60–134	135–224	225–314	315–404
Intramuscular or intravenous morphine	10–22	23–37	38–52	53–67
Oral oxycodone	30–67	67.5–112	112.5–157	157.5–202
Oral codeine	150–447			
Oral hydromorphone	8–17	17.1–28	28.1–39	39.1–51
Intravenous hydromorphone	1.5–3.4	3.5–5.6	5.7–7.9	8–10
Intramuscular meperidine	75-165	166-278	279-390	391-503
Oral methadone	20–44	45–74	75–104	105–134
	↓	↓	↓	↓
Recommended fentanyl patch dose	25 mcg/hour	50 mcg/hour	75 mcg/hour	100 mcg/hour

This table should not be used to convert from fentanyl patches to other medications because these conversions are conservative. Use of the above table for conversion to other analgesic therapies can overestimate the dose of the new agent (with a possible risk of overdosage).

Answer: oxycodone 80 mg daily is in the range of 67.5 – 112 mg daily which correlates to the 50 mcg/hr patch.

EXCEPTION: METHADONE CONVERSION

Morphine to methadone conversion ranges from 3:1 – 20:1 due to methadone's highly variable half-life. There are separate conversion charts for pain specialists to guide methadone dosing. This should be done only by specialists with experience using methadone.

OPIOIDS & CHRONIC NON-CANCER PAIN

Opioids are not first-line for chronic pain and should not be used routinely. If used, follow safe use recommendations:

- Establish and measure goals for pain and function. Reaching low pain rather than no pain may be reasonable.
- Start with immediate-release formulations. Start low and go slow.
- Evaluate risk factors for opioid-related harm routinely.
- Pharmacists should check their state's Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP) database. Look for high doses, dangerous combinations and multiple prescribers.
- Use adjunctive medications to enable a lower opioid dose.
- Avoid benzodiazepines and opioids given together, except in rare cases. This quadruples the risk of overdose death.
- Follow-up, taper the dose, consider discontinuation.

ALLERGY

True opioid allergies are rare. Most complaints of itching or rash are not a true allergic reaction. Symptoms of an opioid allergy include difficulty breathing, a drop in blood pressure, serious rash and swelling of the face, lips, tongue or larynx. In patients with a true opioid allergy, use an agent in a different chemical class (see Study Tip Gal to the right).

Tramadol labeling warns of an increased risk of reactions to tramadol in patients with a previous anaphylactic reaction to opioids. Tapentadol does not have this warning in the U.S., though tramadol and tapentadol are structurally similar. If allergic to tramadol, an allergy to tapentadol is likely, and vice versa.

OPIOID ALLERGY

The common drugs in the same chemical class that cross-react with each other have **cod** or **morph** in the name. Buprenorphine has **norph** instead of **morph**.

Codeine	**Morph**ine	Bupre**norph**ine
Hydro**cod**one	Hydro**morph**one	Heroin (diacetyl-morphine)
Oxy**cod**one	Oxy**morph**one	

What to do if a morphine-type allergy is reported? In practice, make sure it is an actual allergy, and not nausea or itching. If it appears to be a true allergy, choose a drug in a different chemical class, such as methadone or fentanyl. Meperidine is also in a different class, but is no longer recommended as an analgesic.

SIDE EFFECTS AND MANAGEMENT

Opioid-induced respiratory depression (OIRD) is a major concern and the usual cause of fatality in opioid overdose. However, it rarely occurs when opioids are prescribed and taken according to accepted guidelines. Certain patients have a greater risk of OIRD (see Study Tip Gal below); screening for risk factors is essential for prevention.

OPIOID-INDUCED RESPIRATORY DEPRESSION (OIRD) RISKS

An opioid prescription requires a risk/benefit assessment, and monitoring.

OIRD risk factors include:

- History of previous overdose
- Substance use disorder
- Using large doses (≥ 50 mg morphine or equivalent)
- Use with benzodiazepines, gabapentin or pregabalin
- Comorbid illnesses, such as respiratory or psychiatric disease

An opioid antagonist (e.g., naloxone) should be readily available to patients with elevated risk for OIRD.

Most opioid side effects usually lessen over time, except constipation (see Study Tip Gal on next page). If a patient experiences an adverse effect that persists or is bothersome despite treatment (e.g., diphenhydramine for pruritus), switching to another opioid is reasonable.

Postoperative nausea and vomiting (PONV) occurs in surgical patients due primarily to the use of anesthesia and opioids. PONV is treated in the hospital with a 5-HT3 receptor antagonist, such as ondansetron, or a phenothiazine, such as prochlorperazine. All oral opioids (except oxymorphone) should be taken with food to decrease nausea.

Sedation and cognitive effects occur when an opioid is started, or when the dose is increased, but generally lessen over time. Seizures can also be caused by opioids. Pharmacists should advise patients not to drive or do anything potentially hazardous until they are accustomed to the medication. The use of other CNS depressants should be minimized, and alcohol should be avoided.

OPIOID-INDUCED CONSTIPATION

All opioids cause constipation, referred to as opioid-induced constipation (OIC). Opioids reduce GI tract peristalsis, making it difficult to have a bowel movement.

Unlike CNS depression, OIC does not improve over time without treatment; it **must be anticipated and treated.**

Stimulant (e.g., senna, bisacodyl) or **osmotic** (e.g., polyethylene glycol) **laxatives** are the typical first-line treatments, with or without a stool softener. Bisacodyl comes as a tablet (prophylaxis) or suppository (treatment).

If laxatives are insufficient, drugs for OIC that counteract the effects of the opioid in the gut **(PAMORAs)** can be used.

Lubiprostone could be considered following a trial of laxatives or PAMORAs.

TREATMENT OF OPIOID-INDUCED CONSTIPATION

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Peripherally-Acting Mu-Opioid Receptor Antagonists (PAMORAs): block opioid receptors in the gut to reduce constipation without affecting analgesia. PAMORAs are indicated for OIC and are only effective when constipation is secondary to use of an opioid.		
Methylnaltrexone ***(Relistor)*** Injection, tablet	OIC with chronic non-cancer pain: 12 mg SC daily or 450 mg PO once daily OIC with advanced illness: weight-based dose SC every other day CrCl < 60 mL/min: ↓ dose	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** GI obstruction Naloxegol: do not use with strong CYP3A4 inhibitors (e.g., grapefruit juice) **WARNINGS** Risk of GI perforation (rare; monitor for abdominal symptoms), risk of opioid withdrawal (evaluate risk vs. benefit; monitor) Methylnaltrexone: use > 4 months has not been studied, discontinue if opioid discontinued or if severe/persistent diarrhea **SIDE EFFECTS** Abdominal pain, flatulence, diarrhea, nausea, dizziness **NOTES** Stay close to toilet after injecting methylnaltrexone Discontinue all laxatives prior to use (can restart if suboptimal response after 3 days of PAMORA) Only for patients on opioids who have failed OTC laxatives
Naloxegol ***(Movantik)*** Tablet	OIC with chronic non-cancer pain: 25 mg once daily in the morning on an empty stomach CrCl < 60 mL/min: 12.5 mg once daily	
Naldemedine *(Symproic)* Tablet	OIC with chronic non-cancer pain: 0.2 mg daily	
Chloride Channel Activator: approved for other indications in addition to OIC.		
Lubiprostone ***(Amitiza)*** Capsule	OIC: 24 mcg BID	See the Constipation & Diarrhea chapter

CENTRALLY ACTING ANALGESICS

Both tramadol and tapentadol are mu-opioid receptor agonists and inhibitors of norepinephrine reuptake. Tramadol also inhibits reuptake of serotonin. Both tapentadol and tramadol have the same boxed warnings as opioids (see Opioid Analgesics, Safety Concerns earlier in the chapter).

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Tramadol *(ConZip)* C-IV Tablet (IR/ER), ER capsule, solution + acetaminophen	IR: 50-100 mg Q4-6H, max 400 mg/day ER: 100 mg once daily, max 300 mg/day CrCl < 30 mL/min: IR: increase dosing interval to Q12H ER: do not use	**BOXED WARNINGS** Respiratory depression and death have occurred following tonsillectomy and/or adenoidectomy in children found to have ultra-rapid metabolism of tramadol due to a CYP450 2D6 polymorphism; use with CYP3A4 inducers/inhibitors or CYP2D6 inhibitors should be carefully considered due to variable effects **WARNINGS** Seizure risk (avoid if seizure history, head trauma), CNS depression, avoid in patients who are suicidal, risk of serotonin syndrome when used alone or with other serotonergic drugs or inhibitors of CYP2D6 or 3A4, respiratory depression (rare), hypoglycemia, avoid if breastfeeding due to ↑ risk of breathing problems in breastfed infants **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Do not use in children age < 12 yrs or in age < 18 yrs following tonsillectomy/adenoidectomy surgery Do not use with or within 14 days of MAO inhibitors **SIDE EFFECTS** Dizziness, constipation, nausea, somnolence or insomnia, dry mouth, pruritus, flushing, headache, asthenia Lower severity of GI side effects versus strong opioids **NOTES** Tramadol is a prodrug that requires metabolism to its active metabolite by CYP2D6; use with CYP2D6 inhibitors has variable effects due to the mixed mechanism of action of tramadol
Tapentadol *(Nucynta, Nucynta ER)* C-II Tablet (IR/ER)	IR: 50-100 mg Q4-6H ER: 50-250 mg BID CrCl < 30 mL/min: not recommended	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Do not use with or within 14 days of MAO inhibitors **WARNINGS** Can increase seizure risk (avoid in patients with seizure history or seizure risk), risk of serotonin syndrome when used with other serotonergic drugs **SIDE EFFECTS** Dizziness, constipation, nausea, somnolence or insomnia, dry mouth, pruritus Lower severity of GI side effects versus strong opioids **NOTES** Tapentadol is a stronger analgesic than tramadol

CENTRALLY ACTING ANALGESIC DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Caution with other agents that lower seizure threshold.
- Caution with other serotonergic drugs.
- Avoid tramadol with CYP2D6 inhibitors.

OPIOID OVERDOSE

Strategies to prevent fatal overdose include:

- Educate providers and the public about how to prevent and manage overdose (see Study Tip Ga1).
- Ensure access to treatment for patients addicted to opioids.
- Encourage providers to discuss the availability of naloxone with patients prescribed opioids or medications to treat opioid use disorder.
- Implement opioid stewardship practices [e.g., optimize multimodal pain treatment, check Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs (PDMPs)].

Some opioids are designed to mitigate abuse and misuse. Combination products, such as *Suboxone*, are formulated with the abuse-deterrent medication naloxone, while others such as *OxyContin, Roxybond* and *Hysingla ER* are manufactured using specific technology designed to deter crushing, dissolving or other modifications.

OPIOID OVERDOSE MANAGEMENT

Signs and symptoms of overdose: extreme sleepiness, slow or shallow breathing, fingernails or lips turning blue or purple, extremely small "pinpoint" pupils, slow heartbeat and/or low blood pressure.

If overdose is suspected, give naloxone and call 911.

If an individual is not breathing or struggling to breathe, life support measures should be performed.

If there is a question about whether to give naloxone, give it, to avoid fatality.

After administering naloxone, monitor for signs of respiratory depression as opioids stay in the body longer than naloxone. Provide repeat doses as needed (i.e., after 20-60 minutes).

Naloxone is available in two formulations:

- Nasal spray: single-use devices available OTC (3-4 mg/spray) or with a prescription (4-8 mg/spray); spray is administered in 1 nostril and may be repeated every 2-3 minutes in alternating nostrils until emergency medical assistance arrives; onset of action is slower than injection.
- Injection: generic formulation provided in multiple size vials, separate syringe will be needed, may need to repeat doses every 2-3 mins until emergency medical assistance arrives.

TREATMENT OF OPIOID OVERDOSE

Naloxone and nalmefene are opioid antagonists that can be administered to prevent death due to opioid overdose and to help reverse OIRD.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/ MONITORING
Naloxone Injection, nasal spray ***Narcan*** (OTC), ***RiVive*** (OTC), *Kloxxado, Rextovy, Rezenopy:* nasal spray *Zimhi:* injection	IV/IM/SC: 0.4-2 mg Q2-3 min or IV infusion at 0.4 mg/hr Nasal spray: 1 spray (3-8 mg), can repeat Repeat dosing may be required (opioid can last longer than blocking agent)	**SIDE EFFECTS** Opioid-dependent: acute withdrawal symptoms (pain, anxiety, tachypnea) Injection: site reactions (erythema/irritation) Nasal: nasal dryness/congestion/swelling
Nalmefene Injection, nasal spray *Opvee:* nasal spray *Zurnai:* auto-injector	IV (preferred)/IM/SC: Opioid-dependent: 0.1 mg; if no evidence of withdrawal, give 0.5 mg Non-opioid dependent: 0.5 mg After 2-5 minutes, give 1 mg if needed Nasal spray: 1 spray (2.7 mg), can repeat	**SIDE EFFECTS** Opioid-dependent: acute withdrawal symptoms (pain, anxiety, tachypnea, diarrhea, agitation) **NOTES** Long half-life ↑ the risk for severe prolonged withdrawal; optimal observation time unknown

OPIOID USE DISORDER

Opioid use disorder (OUD) is a pattern of problematic opioid use that causes significant impairment or distress (e.g., failure to fulfill obligations at home, school or work). OUD can affect anyone.

TREATMENT OF OPIOID USE DISORDER

Methadone (see Common Opioids earlier in the chapter) and buprenorphine are opioid agonists used to manage opioid use disorder (OUD). Both have long half-lives that minimize withdrawal symptoms and decrease cravings. Additionally, buprenorphine acts as an opioid antagonist at higher doses, which limits euphoria and respiratory depression (↓ risk of overdose). Buprenorphine/naloxone combination products can also be used for OUD (buprenorphine suppresses withdrawal symptoms and naloxone helps prevent misuse).

Naltrexone is an opioid antagonist used to treat alcohol and opioid use disorders. It is available as a daily oral formulation and a monthly IM injection. Lofexidine, a non-opioid, alpha-2 adrenergic agonist, is not indicated for OUD, but is approved to treat withdrawal symptoms in patients who wish to abruptly stop use of opioids altogether.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Buprenorphine C-III Injection, SL tablet/film *Sublocade:* once-monthly SC injection *Brixadi:* weekly or monthly SC injection **+ naloxone** ***Suboxone:*** SL film, ***Zubsolv:*** SL tablet For treatment of pain and OUD	*Suboxone, Zubsolv:* used daily for OUD and used off-label for pain	**BOXED WARNINGS** Refer to the opioid boxed warnings earlier in the chapter Serious harm (e.g., thromboembolic events, tissue damage) or death when extended-release SC injection is administered IV (these have a REMS program to ↓ risk) **WARNINGS** CNS depression, QT prolongation, severe dental adverse events with SL formulations **SIDE EFFECTS** Dizziness, sedation, headache, confusion, mental and physical impairment, diaphoresis, QT prolongation, respiratory depression (dose-dependent) *Suboxone* SL film: constipation, nausea, hyperhidrosis **NOTES** *Sublocade:* must have been taking a stable dose of transmucosal buprenorphine for 7 days prior to initiation
Naltrexone *(Vivitrol)* Tablet, ER injection	Tablet: 25 mg daily for 1-3 days, then increase to 50 mg once daily Injection: 380 mg IM every 4 weeks	**NOTES** Do not initiate until patient is opioid free for at least 7-10 days (or longer for long-acting opioids)
Lofexidine *(Lucemyra)* Tablet For mitigation of withdrawal symptoms	Initial: 0.54 mg four times daily in 5 to 6 hour intervals; maximum duration of treatment 14 days	**WARNINGS** Hypotension, bradycardia, syncope, QT prolongation, ↑ CNS depression, ↑ risk of opioid overdose after discontinuation, must taper when discontinue **NOTES** Can reduce efficacy of oral naltrexone; paroxetine and other CYP2D6 inhibitors can ↑ risk of orthostatic hypotension and bradycardia, monitor closely

COMMON ADJUVANTS FOR PAIN MANAGEMENT

Adjuvants [e.g., muscle relaxants, antiseizure medications (ASMs), antidepressants, topical anesthetics] can be added to opioid or non-opioid analgesics (i.e., multimodal treatment). They are commonly used for pain associated with neuropathy (e.g., from diabetes or spinal cord injury), postherpetic neuralgia (PHN), fibromyalgia and osteoarthritis (OA).

ASMs (e.g., pregabalin, gabapentin), tricyclic antidepressants (TCAs) and SNRIs are useful for neuropathic pain because unlike other antidepressants (e.g., SSRIs), they block norepinephrine uptake, which has shown to be beneficial. Muscle relaxants have various, poorly understood mechanisms of action. Some work predominantly by causing CNS depression, leading to relaxation of skeletal muscles, while others decrease transmission of reflexes at the spinal level.

Injectable adjuvants can be used by pain specialists in specific cases. For example, clonidine injection can be combined with opioids in intrathecal (epidural) infusion pumps for patients with cancer pain when other agents are insufficient. Only analgesics approved by the FDA for intrathecal administration should be administered via this route. Other injectable adjuvants include anesthetics, such as lidocaine injected locally to provide pain relief to a small area (e.g., before a dental procedure or placing stitches), or steroids, which can be injected into a joint for temporary pain relief.

ORAL ADJUVANTS FOR NEUROPATHIC PAIN

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Antiseizure Medications (ASMs)		
Gabapentin *(Neurontin)* Capsule, tablet, solution, suspension *Gralise:* tablet for PHN Gabapentin enacarbil *(Horizant)*: ER tablet for PHN and restless legs syndrome	Initial: 300 mg TID, max 3,600 mg/day CrCl < 60 mL/min: ↓ dose and/or extend interval	**WARNINGS** Angioedema/anaphylaxis, multiorgan hypersensitivity (DRESS) reactions, suicidal thoughts or behavior (all ASMs), ↑ seizure frequency if rapidly discontinued in those with seizures, CNS depression (if possible, avoid other CNS depressants; if prescribed with an opioid, use the lowest possible dose) **SIDE EFFECTS** Dizziness, somnolence, peripheral edema/weight gain, ocular effects (diplopia, blurred vision), ataxia, nystagmus, tremor, dry mouth, mild anxiolytic (a scheduled drug in some states) **NOTES** Used most commonly off-label for fibromyalgia, pain (neuropathic), headache, alcohol use disorder, and alcohol withdrawal IR, ER and gabapentin enacarbil are not interchangeable
Pregabalin *(Lyrica)* C-V Capsule, solution, ER tablet	Initial: 75 mg BID or 50 mg TID, max 450 mg/day CrCl < 60 mL/min: ↓ dose and/or extend interval	**WARNINGS** Angioedema, hypersensitivity reactions, risks of suicidal thoughts or behavior (all ASMs), ↑ seizure frequency if rapidly discontinued in those with seizures; can cause peripheral edema, CNS depression such as dizziness and somnolence (if possible, avoid other CNS depressants; if prescribed with an opioid, use the lowest possible dose) **SIDE EFFECTS** Dizziness, somnolence, peripheral edema/weight gain, mild anxiolytic, diplopia, ataxia **NOTES** Approved for fibromyalgia, PHN and neuropathic pain associated with diabetes and spinal cord injury

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Carbamazepine ***(Tegretol, Tegretol XR,*** *Carbatrol, Epitol, Equetro)* Tablet (IR/ER), ER capsule, chewable tablet, suspension, injection	Initial: 100 mg BID, max 1,200 mg/day	**NOTES** FDA-approved for trigeminal neuralgia See the Seizures/Epilepsy chapter
SNRIs and TCAs		
Milnacipran *(Savella, Savella Titration Pack)* Tablet	Day 1: 12.5 mg daily Days 2-3: 12.5 mg BID Days 4-7: 25 mg BID, then 50 mg BID CrCl < 30 mL/min: max dose is 25 mg BID	**BOXED WARNINGS** Milnacipran is an SNRI; antidepressants ↑ the risk of suicidal thoughts and behavior in children, adolescents and young adults with depression and other psychiatric disorders (do not use in pediatric patients) **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Use with or within 14 days of MAO inhibitors, avoid with linezolid or IV methylene blue **SIDE EFFECTS** Nausea, headache, constipation, dizziness, insomnia, hot flashes **NOTES** Indicated for fibromyalgia only (not approved for depression) Do not use IV digoxin with milnacipran; can ↑ the toxic effect of digoxin including postural hypotension and tachycardia (particularly IV digoxin) Increased bleeding risk with anticoagulants or antiplatelets
Amitriptyline Tablet	10-50 mg QHS, sometimes higher	**NOTES** See the Depression chapter Desipramine: titrate every 3-7 days Duloxetine is approved for the treatment of neuropathic and musculoskeletal pain
Desipramine *(Norpramin)* Tablet	Initial: 25 mg daily, max 150 mg/day	
Duloxetine ***(Cymbalta,*** *Drizalma Sprinkle)* Capsule	30-60 mg/day	

ORAL ADJUVANTS FOR MUSCULOSKELETAL PAIN/SPASMS

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Antispasmodics: muscle relaxants with analgesic effects; use caution with other CNS depressants (e.g., alcohol, benzodiazepines and opioids) due to the additive risk of CNS depression.		
Baclofen *(Lioresal)* Tablet, solution, injection, oral suspension, granules	5-20 mg TID-QID PRN Injection given via intrathecal pump for severe spasticity	**BOXED WARNINGS** Abrupt withdrawal of intrathecal baclofen has resulted in severe effects (high fever, lethargy, rebound/↑ spasticity, muscle rigidity and rhabdomyolysis), leading to organ failure and death **SIDE EFFECTS** All muscle relaxants: excessive sedation, dizziness, confusion, asthenia (muscle weakness) Baclofen: nausea, headache, constipation, hypotension, seizures **NOTES** Start low and titrate carefully in older adults; watch for additive side effects
Cyclobenzaprine *(Amrix, Fexmid*)* Tablet, capsule	IR: 5-10 mg TID PRN ER: 15-30 mg once daily	**SIDE EFFECTS** Dry mouth **NOTES** Can be efficacious for fibromyalgia Serotonergic: do not combine with other serotonergic agents Can precipitate or exacerbate cardiac arrhythmias; caution in older adults or those with heart disease (chemically similar to a TCA; almost identical to amitriptyline)
Tizanidine *(Zanaflex)* Tablet, capsule	2-4 mg Q6-8H PRN (max 36 mg/day)	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Use with strong CYP1A2 inhibitors (e.g., fluvoxamine, ciprofloxacin) **SIDE EFFECTS** Hypotension, dry mouth, ↑ LFTs **NOTES** Centrally acting alpha-2 agonist
Antispasmodics: muscle relaxants that exert their effects by sedation.		
Carisoprodol *(Soma)* C-IV	250-350 mg QID PRN	**NOTES** Poor CYP2C19 metabolizers will have ↑ concentrations Rapid CYP2C19 metabolizers will convert to the active metabolite (meprobamate) faster (↑ toxicity/sedation)
Metaxalone	800 mg TID-QID PRN	**SIDE EFFECTS** Hepatotoxicity
Methocarbamol *(Robaxin)*	1,500-2,000 mg QID PRN	**SIDE EFFECTS** Sedation
Rarely used muscle relaxants include dantrolene (*Dantrium* for malignant hyperthermia), chlorzoxazone, orphenadrine.		

**Brand discontinued but name still used in practice.*

TOPICAL ADJUVANTS

DRUG	DOSING/NOTES	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Lidocaine Cream, gel, patch Rx and OTC **Lidocaine 5% patch *(Lidoderm)*** **Lidocaine viscous gel** Lidocaine 1.8% patch *(ZTlido)* Rx Lidocaine 4% and lower strength patches *(Salonpas Pain Relieving, Lidocare)* OTC	5% and 1.8% patches for PHN: Apply 1-3 patches/day to painful area and wear for up to 12 hrs/day	**SIDE EFFECTS** Patch: minor application site reactions (slight burning, pruritus, rash) **NOTES** Can cut into smaller pieces (before removing backing) *Lidoderm:* do not apply more than 3 patches at one time Caution with used patches; can harm children and pets; fold patch in half and discard safely Do not cover with heating pads/electric blankets Do not use on broken, abraded, severely burned skin or skin with open lesions (↑ amount absorbed)
Capsaicin Cream, gel, patch, stick, lotion Rx and OTC **Capsaicin 0.025% and 0.075% cream *(Zostrix, Zostrix HP)*** OTC Capsaicin 8% patch *(Qutenza)* Rx	Apply to affected area TID-QID	**SIDE EFFECTS** Topical burning, which dissipates with continued use **NOTES** ↓ TRPV1-expressing nociceptive nerve endings (↓ substance P) Onset of pain relief takes 2-4 weeks of continuous application for OTC products and 1 week for *Qutenza* Do not touch genitals, nasal area, mouth or eyes after application; wash hands after application *Qutenza* is applied in a healthcare provider's office for PHN pain; can cause topical burning and requires pre-treatment with lidocaine; applied for 1 hr and effect lasts for months
Methyl salicylate Patch, cream, stick OTC ***BenGay, IcyHot, Salonpas,*** *Thera-Gesic,* other store brands: contain methyl salicylate plus other ingredients	Apply to affected area TID-QID	**NOTES** Occasionally, topicals have caused first to third-degree burns, mostly in patients with pre-existing neuropathic damage; discontinue use and seek medical attention if signs of skin injury (pain, swelling, or blistering) occur following application
Trolamine *(Aspercreme)* Cream OTC	Apply to affected area as needed QID	**NOTES** Do not use on damaged, irritated or broken skin or wounds

KEY COUNSELING POINTS

See the Drug Formulations and Patient Counseling chapter for counseling language/layman's terminology.

ACETAMINOPHEN

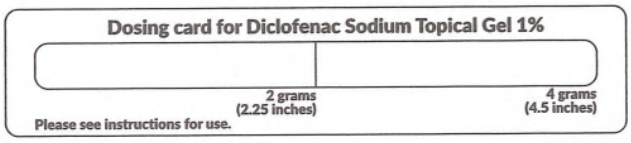
- The total daily dose of all products containing acetaminophen should not exceed 4,000 mg.
- Can cause hepatotoxicity.

NSAIDs

- Requires a MedGuide.
- Can cause:
  - ☐ Stomach bleeding.
  - ☐ Increased blood pressure.
  - ☐ Swelling.
  - ☐ Photosensitivity.
- Do not use this medicine if you have experienced breathing problems or allergic-type reactions after taking aspirin or other NSAIDs.
- Avoid in pregnancy (teratogenic).

DICLOFENAC GEL

- Use the reusable dosing card inside the package to correctly measure each dose. Apply diclofenac gel onto the dosing card evenly up to the correct dosing line.



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  - ☐ The dose for hands, wrists or elbows is 2 grams applied four times daily. Do not exceed 8 grams each day to these areas.
  - ☐ The dose for feet, ankles or knees is 4 grams applied four times daily. Do not exceed more than 16 grams each day to these areas.
- Do not shower, bathe or wash your treated hands for at least one hour after application.

OPIOIDS

- Can cause:
  - ☐ Drowsiness.
  - ☐ Constipation.
- Take with food or milk if stomach upset occurs. Exception: oxymorphone should be taken on an empty stomach.
- Do not consume alcohol, especially with morphine ER capsules, *Nucynta ER,* oxymorphone ER or hydrocodone ER capsules.
- Morphine ER capsules can be opened and the contents sprinkled on applesauce.

MUSCLE RELAXANTS

- Can cause drowsiness.

CAPSAICIN TOPICAL

- Unless treating hand pain, wash hands thoroughly with soap and water immediately after use.
- If treating hands, leave on for 30 minutes, then wash hands as above.
- Do not touch genitals, nasal area, mouth or eyes with the medicine; it will burn the sensitive skin.
- The burning pain should dissipate with continual use; starting at the lower strength will help.
- Do not cover with heating pads/electric blankets or bandages; serious burning can occur.

Select Guidelines/References

CDC Clinical Practice Guideline for Prescribing Opioids for Pain. Nov 2022. *MMWR* 71(3);1-95.

2024 SAMHSA Opioid Overdose Prevention Toolkit.

American Academy of Neurology. Oral and Topical Treatment of Painful Diabetic Polyneuropathy Practice Guideline Update. Jan 2022. Neurology 98;31-43.

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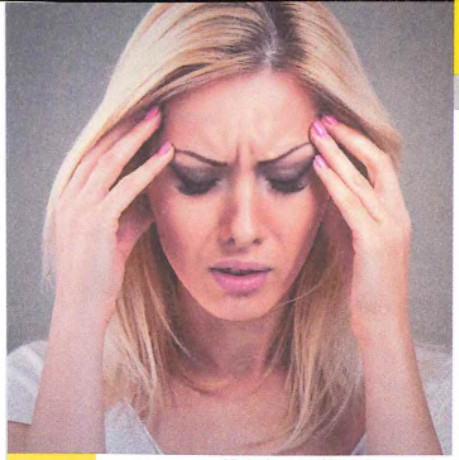

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CHAPTER 59

MIGRAINE

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= Study Tip Gal

BACKGROUND

Headache treatment is a common concern in the community pharmacy. It is one of the most frequent complaints in neurologists' offices and a common pain complaint seen in family practice. Most headaches are migraine or tension-type headaches.

Migraines are chronic headaches that cause significant pain for hours or days. Most migraines cause nausea, vomiting and sensitivity to light and sound. In about one-third of patients, migraines are preceded or accompanied by sensory warning symptoms or signs (auras), such as flashes of light, blind spots or tingling in the arms or legs. Tension-type headaches are not typically associated with these symptoms; they are described as a pressure or tightness around the head.

A headache accompanied by fever, stiff neck, rash, confusion, seizures, double vision, shortness of breath, weakness, numbness, chest pain or aphasia (trouble speaking) could indicate a serious cardiovascular, cerebrovascular or infectious event. Patients with these symptoms should seek immediate medical attention.

CAUSES

The cause of migraines is not well understood. They may be caused by increased neuronal activity, which results in an imbalance of neurotransmitters (including serotonin), and/or activation of the trigeminal nerve which leads to the release of calcitonin gene-related peptide (CGRP). These neurotransmitter and neuropeptide changes ultimately lead to neurogenic inflammation and vasodilation in cranial blood vessels.

Patients should identify and avoid "triggers" to reduce migraine incidence (see Study Tip Gal).

COMMON MIGRAINE TRIGGERS

Hormonal Changes in Females
Fluctuations in estrogen can trigger headaches.

Foods
Common offending agents include alcohol, especially beer and red wine, aged cheeses, chocolate, aspartame, overuse of caffeine, monosodium glutamate (MSG), salty foods and processed foods.

Stress

Sensory Stimuli
Bright lights, sun glare, loud sounds and certain scents (which may be pleasant or unpleasant odors).

Changes in Wake-Sleep Pattern
Missing sleep or getting too much sleep (e.g., jet lag).

Changes in the Environment (e.g., weather, barometric pressure)

DIAGNOSIS

Migraines can be diagnosed when an adult has at least five attacks (not attributed to another disorder), where the headaches fulfill the following criteria:

1. Last 4 – 72 hours.
2. Have ≥ 2 of the following characteristics: unilateral location, pulsating, moderate-severe pain or aggravated by (or causing avoidance of) routine physical activity.
3. One of the following occurs: nausea, vomiting, photophobia (sensitivity to light) or phonophobia (sensitivity to sound).

NON-DRUG TREATMENT

A headache diary can help patients identify triggers. Non-pharmacologic interventions involve avoiding triggers, stress management, aerobic exercise, massage, physical therapy, spinal manipulation or applying cold compresses/ice to the head. Acupuncture can reduce migraines in some patients.

There are several neuromodulation devices approved for the prevention and/or treatment of migraines. These include transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS) units (e.g., *Cefaly*, *Relivion)* and remote electrical neuromodulation (REN) devices (e.g., *Nerivio)*. These devices are worn by the patient and provide small electrical pulses that block pain signals. The *gammaCore Sapphire* device is approved for both migraines and cluster headaches.

TREATMENT PRINCIPLES

ACUTE VS. PROPHYLACTIC TREATMENT

Acute (abortive) treatment is taken only as needed for a headache that is already present. Drugs used to stop an active migraine will not prevent future migraines (except rimegepant, discussed later in the chapter).

Prophylactic (preventive) treatment decreases the frequency and/or severity of migraines. Medication is taken routinely even when the patient feels well, but is not effective for treating an acute migraine.

MENSTRUAL MIGRAINES

A menstrual migraine (MM) occurs close to the onset of menstruation and not at other times of the month (likely due to fluctuation in hormone levels). Continuous or extended-cycle oral contraceptives keep estrogen levels more constant and can ↓ MM. NSAIDs or a triptan [specifically those with a longer half-life: frovatriptan (preferred) or naratriptan] can be started prior to menses and continued for 5 – 7 days.

Migraine with aura is associated with ↑ risk of stroke. Progestin-only or nonhormonal contraceptives are recommended for MM with aura to avoid additive stroke risk with estrogen-containing contraceptives; estrogen products (including the vaginal ring) can be used for MM without aura.

MEDICATION OVERUSE HEADACHES

Medication overuse ("rebound") headaches (MOH) can result from the overuse of acute headache medications. MOH are headaches that occur ≥ 15 days per month in a patient with a preexisting headache disorder. All patients should be educated to limit acute headache treatment medications (depending on the drug being used). Patients with MOH should stop the "over-used" medication; if the drug is an opioid or contains butalbital, a slow taper is needed.

ACUTE DRUG TREATMENT

OTC options include acetaminophen, aspirin, *Advil Migraine* (which contains only ibuprofen), naproxen and combination products such as *Excedrin Migraine* (aspirin, acetaminophen and caffeine). OTC drugs can be tried for migraines that are mild to moderate. Refer to the Pain chapter.

Prescription options for acute treatment include NSAIDs (higher doses or alternate options than those available OTC), serotonin receptor agonists (triptans), select CGRP receptor antagonists, ergotamine drugs and lasmiditan.

Butalbital-containing products, opioids, tramadol and tapentadol are not recommended due to decreased efficacy, abuse/dependence potential and risk of MOH.

Some patients get more relief from OTC products, some from triptans and others from a combination of medications. Always ask the patient what they have tried in the past, and if it was useful. Patients with nausea/vomiting may benefit from adjunctive treatment with an antiemetic.

TRIPTANS

Triptans are selective agonists for 5-HT1 (serotonin) receptors (1B/1D subtypes); they vasoconstrict cranial blood vessels, inhibit neuropeptide release and decrease pain transmission. They are first line for acute treatment. Triptans should be taken at the first sign of a migraine for best results. Triptans should not be used for > 10 days per month to avoid MOH.

DRUG	DOSING
Rizatriptan *(Maxalt-MLT, Maxalt)*	Initial: 5-10 mg, can repeat × 1 after 2 hrs (max 30 mg/day)
Tablet, ODT	
+ meloxicam *(Symbravo)* (10/20 mg)	1 tablet PO x 1
Sumatriptan	**Oral:** 25, 50 or 100 mg, can repeat × 1 after 2 hrs (max 200 mg/day)
Tablet, SC (autoinjector, prefilled syringe and solution), nasal spray	**Subcutaneous:** *Imitrex, Imitrex STATdose System:* 4 or 6 mg, can repeat × 1 after 1 hr (max 12 mg/day)
Imitrex Tablet, nasal spray, SC injection	*Zembrace SymTouch:* 3 mg, can repeat up to 4 times per day; wait a minimum of 1 hr between doses or 1 hr after another sumatriptan product (max 12 mg/day)
Imitrex STATdose System, Zembrace SymTouch SC autoinjector	**Intranasal:** Spray *(Imitrex)*: 5, 10, or 20 mg in one nostril can repeat × 1 after 2 hrs (max 40 mg/day)
Onzetra Xsail Nasal powder	Spray *(Tosymra)*: 10 mg in one nostril can repeat × 1 after 1 hr (max 30 mg/day)
Tosymra Nasal spray	Powder: 11 mg in each nostril using nosepiece, can repeat × 1 after 2 hrs (max 44 mg/day)
+ naproxen *(Treximet)* Tablet (85/500 mg)	***Treximet:*** 1 tab, can repeat × 1 after 2 hrs (max 2 tabs/24 hrs)
Zolmitriptan *(Zomig)* Tablet, ODT, nasal spray	PO: 1.25-5 mg, can repeat × 1 after 2 hrs Intranasal: 2.5-5 mg in one nostril, can repeat × 1 after 2 hrs Max 10 mg/day (all formulations)
Almotriptan Tablet	Initial: 6.25-12.5 mg, can repeat × 1 after 2 hrs (max 25 mg/day)
Eletriptan *(Relpax)* Tablet	Initial: 20-40 mg, can repeat × 1 after 2 hrs (max 80 mg/day)
Frovatriptan *(Frova)* Tablet	Initial: 2.5 mg, can repeat × 1 after 2 hrs (max 7.5 mg/day)
Naratriptan Tablet	Initial: 1-2.5 mg, can repeat × 1 after 4 hrs (max 5 mg/day)

SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING

CONTRAINDICATIONS

Cerebrovascular disease (stroke/TIA), uncontrolled hypertension, ischemic heart disease, coronary artery vasospasm, peripheral vascular disease, hemiplegic or basilar migraine, use within 24 hrs of another triptan or ergotamine-type medication

See Drug Interactions for triptans contraindicated with MAO inhibitors and CYP450 3A4 inhibitors.

WARNINGS

Risk of ↑ BP, serotonin syndrome, cardiac and cerebrovascular events, arrhythmias, MOH, seizures (sumatriptan only); caution in hepatic or renal impairment (product specific)

SIDE EFFECTS

Paresthesia (tingling/numbness), dizziness, hot/cold sensations, chest pain/tightness, dry mouth, somnolence, nausea, unpleasant taste, vision loss

Triptan sensations (pressure or heaviness in the chest or pressure in the neck region) usually dissipate shortly after administration

NOTES

ODTs, nasal sprays and injections are useful if nausea is present. No water is required for ODTs. Nasal sprays and injections work faster.

Nasal sprays contain only 1 dose (do not prime).

Treximet: protect from moisture; dispense in original container.

Treximet and *Symbravo:* carry all warnings associated with naproxen and meloxicam, respectively (see Pain chapter).

Maxalt-MLT ODT contains phenylalanine and should not be used in patients with phenylketonuria.

Children and Adolescents

Almotriptan tablets, zolmitriptan nasal spray and *Treximet* are approved for children and adolescents age ≥ 12 years; rizatriptan tablets and ODT are approved for age ≥ 6 years.

Duration of Action

Frovatriptan has the longest half-life (26 hrs). Both frovatriptan and naratriptan are considered long-acting, but onset is slower. These can be chosen if headache recurs after dosing, lasts a long time or can be anticipated (e.g., MM). All other triptans have a shorter half-life with a faster onset.

Sumatriptan Injections

All are injected SC. Preferred site is lateral thigh or upper arm. Protect from light.

Needle shield of the prefilled syringe contains a latex derivative. This has the potential to cause allergic reactions in latex-sensitive individuals.

TRIPTAN FORMULATIONS

TABLET	ODT	NASAL SPRAY/POWDER	SC INJECTION
All triptans	Rizatriptan *(Maxalt-MLT)* Zolmitriptan	**Spray** Sumatriptan *(Imitrex)* Zolmitriptan *(Zomig)* **Powder** Sumatriptan *(Onzetra Xsail)*	**Prefilled Syringe and Vial** Sumatriptan **AutoInjector** Sumatriptan *(Imitrex STATdose System, Zembrace SymTouch)*

TRIPTAN DRUG INTERACTIONS

- The risk of serotonin syndrome may be increased when combining a triptan with other serotonergic drugs, such as SSRIs or SNRIs (see the Drug Interactions chapter). Many patients take both safely since triptans are only used as needed, but there is an FDA warning regarding this combination.
- Sumatriptan, rizatriptan and zolmitriptan are contraindicated with MAO inhibitors (or within two weeks of stopping) due to increased triptan concentrations when used together.
- Use with strong CYP3A4 inhibitors: eletriptan is contraindicated; reduce the dose of almotriptan.

ERGOTAMINE DRUGS

Ergotamine, a nonselective agonist of serotonin receptors, causes cerebral vasoconstriction. Ergotamine may be an option for patients who do not find benefit with a triptan.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Dihydroergotamine *(Migranal, Trudhesa)* Injection (IM/SC/IV), nasal spray	IM/SC/IV: 1 mg at first sign of headache, repeat hourly to a max dose of 2 mg/day (IV) or 3 mg /day (IM/SC) Weekly max: 6 mg **Intranasal** *Migranal:* 1 spray (0.5 mg) into each nostril, can repeat after 15 minutes, up to a total of 4 sprays (2 mg/day) *Trudhesa:* 1 spray (0.725 mg) into each nostril, can repeat after 1 hour, up to 2 doses/day or 3 doses/week	**BOXED WARNING** Contraindicated with potent CYP3A4 inhibitors (protease inhibitors, macrolides) due to serious and life-threatening peripheral ischemia **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Uncontrolled hypertension, ischemic heart disease (e.g., angina, MI), coronary artery vasospasm, peripheral vascular disease, pregnancy, hemiplegic/basilar migraine, renal/hepatic impairment, sepsis, use with pressors/vasoconstrictive drugs, use within 24 hours of serotonin agonists (triptans) or other ergotamine-type drugs **WARNINGS** Cardiovascular effects (avoid with baseline risk), cerebrovascular events, ergotism (intense vasoconstriction resulting in peripheral vascular ischemia and possible gangrene), cardiac valvular fibrosis, MOH, potentially serious drug interactions **SIDE EFFECTS** Nausea, vomiting Nasal spray: rhinitis, dysgeusia, local irritation **NOTES** Nasal spray: prime 4 times. Do not inhale deeply (to let drug absorb into skin in nose). Recommended at first sign of attack, but can be used at any time during migraine.
Ergotamine (Ergomar) Sublingual tablet	2 mg single dose, may repeat after at least 30 min, up to 6 mg/day or 10 mg/week	
Ergotamine + caffeine *(Migergot)* Tablet (1/100 mg), suppository	PO: take 2 tablets at onset of migraine, then 1 tablet every 30 min PRN to a max of 6 tablets per attack Suppository *(Migergot)*: 1 suppository at first sign of migraine, may repeat × 1 after 1 hr to a max of 2 suppositories per attack	

OTHER ABORTIVE AGENTS

Rimegepant, ubrogepant and zavegepant are CGRP receptor antagonists. CGRP contributes to vasodilation and neurogenic inflammation in the pathogenesis of migraines; blocking the CGRP receptor reduces or eliminates migraine pain. Ubrogepant and zavegepant are approved to treat acute migraine attacks, and rimegepant is approved to both prevent and treat acute migraine attacks.

Lasmiditan is a first-in-class serotonin agonist that is selective for the 5-HT1F receptor subtype. Unlike the triptans and ergotamine drugs, it does not cause vasoconstriction; it is not contraindicated in patients with CVD.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
CGRP Receptor Antagonists		
Rimegepant *(Nurtec)* ODT	75 mg PO once Max dose 75 mg/24 hours	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Do not use with strong CYP3A4 inhibitors (ubrogepant only, but caution with rimegepant) **WARNINGS** Rimegepant: hypersensitivity reactions, including delayed serious reactions **SIDE EFFECTS** Nausea, somnolence, taste disorder (zavegepant) **NOTES** The safety of treating > 8 migraines/month (ubrogepant, zavegepant) or using > 18 doses/month (rimegepant) has not been established
Ubrogepant *(Ubrelvy)* Tablet	50-100 mg PO, can repeat × 1 after 2 hrs Max dose 200 mg/24 hours Child-Pugh Class C: 50 mg (can repeat × 1) CrCl 15-29 mL/min: 50 mg (can repeat × 1) CrCl < 15 mL/min: do not use	
Zavegepant *(Zavzpret)* Nasal spray	1 spray (10 mg) in 1 nostril Max dose 10 mg/day CrCl < 30 mL/min or Child-Pugh Class C: do not use	
Serotonin Receptor (5-HT1F) Agonist		
Lasmiditan *(Reyvow)* C-V	50-200 mg PO as a single dose Max 1 dose/24 hours	**WARNINGS** CNS depression, including significant driving impairment (should not be used if the patient cannot wait ≥ 8 hrs after dose to drive or operate heavy machinery); use caution if patient is taking other CNS depressants May cause serotonin syndrome with or without other serotonergic drugs May ↓ HR; use with caution if using other drugs that ↓ HR **SIDE EFFECTS** Dizziness, fatigue, paresthesia **NOTES** The safety of treating > 4 migraines/month has not been established

CGRP RECEPTOR ANTAGONIST DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Rimegepant and ubrogepant are major substrates of CYP3A4 and minor substrates of P-gp. Strong 3A4 inhibitors and inducers should be avoided with both drugs; moderate 3A4 inducers should also be avoided with rimegepant. Ubrogepant and rimegepant require dose adjustments for other drug interactions.

BUTALBITAL-CONTAINING PRODUCTS

Butalbital is a barbiturate. Acetaminophen/butalbital/caffeine *(Fioricet)* and aspirin/butalbital/caffeine are both available in combinations with codeine (e.g., *Fioricet with Codeine)*. All of these products are federally classified as schedule III, except *Fioricet* (which is exempt). *Fioricet* remains a popular drug, but butalbital-containing products are not recommended for treating acute migraines due to abuse/dependence issues and lower efficacy. If discontinuing these products in patients who have used them regularly and long-term, they must be tapered off or the patient will have worsening of headache, tremors and be at risk for delirium and seizures.

PROPHYLACTIC DRUG TREATMENT

Preventive treatment should be considered in patients who have ≥ 4 migraines per month, have migraines that decrease quality of life, if acute treatments are ineffective, contraindicated, overused, or not tolerated or if patients request it.

Selection of a prophylactic drug is based on patient characteristics and the medication side effect profile; efficacy data is similar for all options (~50% reduction in headache days). A full trial, at a reasonable dose, is a minimum of 8 weeks. If no response after this trial, consider switching to a different drug. Consider continuing for 6 – 12 months if partial response is noted. Many patients try more than one drug before finding one that works well for them. Oral prophylactic therapies include:

- First-line options:
  - Beta-blockers (best evidence is with propranolol, timolol and metoprolol, though others have been used)
  - Tricyclic antidepressants (e.g., amitriptyline) and SNRIs (e.g., venlafaxine)
  - Topiramate (causes weight loss, which may make it preferred if in need of weight loss)
  - CGRP receptor antagonists: more options for prophylaxis (see table on next page) than for acute migraine treatment
  - Valproic acid (if no childbearing potential)
- Second-line options:
  - Lisinopril and candesartan
  - OnabotulinumtoxinA (requires injection by a provider)
- Natural products: riboflavin (vitamin B2), magnesium, butterbur, feverfew, topical peppermint and coenzyme Q10 have been used for the prevention of migraines.

BETA-BLOCKERS AND ANTISEIZURE MEDICATIONS

DRUG	COMMENTS/SIDE EFFECTS
Beta-Blockers (see Hypertension chapter for complete discussion)	
Propranolol *(Inderal LA)*	**WARNINGS** Use caution with bronchospastic diseases (e.g., asthma, COPD), especially with non-selective drugs (propranolol and timolol)
Metoprolol tartrate *(Lopressor)* **Metoprolol succinate *(Toprol XL,* *Kapspargo Sprinkle)***	**SIDE EFFECTS** Bradycardia, hypotension, CNS effects (e.g., fatigue, dizziness, depression) (more so with propranolol, the most lipophilic), impotence, cold extremities (can exacerbate Raynaud's)
Timolol	**NOTES** Propranolol XL formulations are not FDA-approved for migraine prophylaxis Metoprolol is beta-1 selective
Antiseizure Medications (see Seizures/Epilepsy chapter for complete discussion)	
Divalproex *(Depakote, Depakote ER, Depakote Sprinkle)* **Valproic acid**	**BOXED WARNINGS** Fetal harm, hepatic failure, pancreatitis **WARNINGS AND SIDE EFFECTS** Weight changes (gain > loss), thrombocytopenia, ↑ ammonia, alopecia, N/V, somnolence, tremor
Topiramate *(Topamax,* *Topamax Sprinkle, Eprontia)* Topiramate extended release *(Qudexy XR, Trokendi XR)*	**WARNINGS** Fetal harm, metabolic acidosis, nephrolithiasis, ↑ ammonia, secondary angle-closure glaucoma and visual field defects, oligohidrosis **SIDE EFFECTS** Weight loss, somnolence, cognitive impairment, paresthesia, reduced efficacy of oral contraceptives

CGRP RECEPTOR ANTAGONISTS

There are two oral CGRP receptor antagonists approved for the prevention of migraines: atogepant and rimegepant, which is also approved for the treatment of migraines (see Other Abortive Agents section). The remaining CGRP antagonists used for migraine prevention are injectable monoclonal antibodies.

DRUG	TYPICAL DOSING RANGE	COMMENTS/SIDE EFFECTS
Atogepant *(Qulipta)* Tablet	10, 30 or 60 mg PO daily	**WARNINGS** *Aimovig:* new or worsening hypertension Rimegepant: hypersensitivity reactions, including delayed serious reactions **SIDE EFFECTS** Injection site reaction, antibody development, constipation Atogepant, rimegepant: nausea, somnolence **NOTES** SC injection: self-administer in the abdomen, thigh or upper arm; store refrigerated in the original carton prior to use; allow to sit at room temp for at least 30 min before injecting Atogepant: dose adjustments depend on concurrent use with CYP3A4 inhibitors or inducers or OATP inhibitors Rimegepant: do not use with moderate-strong CYP3A4 inducers or strong CYP3A4 inhibitors Galcancezumab: also approved for cluster headache prevention
Rimegepant *(Nurtec)* ODT	75 mg PO every other day	
Eptinezumab-jjmr *(Vyepti)* Injection	100 mg IV once every 3 months; some patients benefit from 300 mg	
Erenumab-aooe *(Aimovig)* SC autoinjector	70-140 mg SC once monthly	
Fremanezumab-vfrm *(Ajovy)* SC autoinjector, prefilled syringe	225 mg SC once monthly or 675 mg SC every 3 months	
Galcancezumab-gnlm *(Emgality)* SC autoinjector, prefilled syringe	240 mg SC as loading dose, then 120 mg SC once monthly	

BOTULINUM TOXIN

OnabotulinumtoxinA *(Botox)* injections are used for prophylaxis of chronic migraines only (≥ 15 headache days per month).

KEY COUNSELING POINTS

See the Drug Formulations and Patient Counseling chapter for counseling language/layman's terminology and for instructions on self-administered injections, nasal sprays/powder and ODTs.

ALL TRIPTANS

- Can cause serotonin syndrome if taken with other medications that can increase serotonin.
- If your symptoms are only partly relieved, or if your headache comes back, you may take a second dose in the time period explained to you by the pharmacist.
- If you use migraine treatments frequently or if your migraines are severe, discuss using a daily medication for prevention with your provider.

IMITREX STATDOSE SYSTEM

- Includes a carrying case, a *STATdose* pen and two syringe cartridges.

MAXALT-MLT ODT

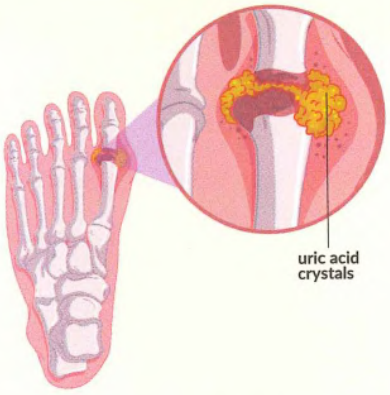
- Contains phenylalanine. Do not use if you have phenylketonuria (PKU).

ONZETRA XSAIL NASAL POWDER

- Open the pouch and remove the first nosepiece. Insert the nosepiece into the device until you hear it click.
- Press and release the white button to pierce the medication capsule.
- Insert the nosepiece deeply into the nose (first nostril). Rotate the device to place the mouthpiece into your mouth.
- Blow into the device with your mouth for 2 – 3 seconds to deliver medication into your nose. A vibration (or rattling noise) may occur.
- Press the clear tab to remove the first nosepiece. Check the capsule to be sure the medication is gone. Discard the first nosepiece.
- Insert the second nosepiece into the device and repeat the steps above using the second nostril.

Select Guidelines/References

The American Headache Society Clinical Practice Guidelines. Available at http://americanheadachesociety.org/resources/clinicians/guidelines (accessed 2025 Feb 17).



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CHAPTER 60

GOUT

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= Study Tip Gal = Key Drugs Guy

BACKGROUND

Gout is a type of arthritis caused by a buildup of uric acid (UA) crystals, primarily in the joints. UA is produced as an end-product of purine metabolism (see UA production diagram later in the chapter). Purines (e.g., adenosine) are present in many foods, and they make up one of the base pairs of DNA. Under normal conditions, UA is excreted renally (mainly) and via the GI tract. Gout develops as a result of either an underexcretion or an overproduction of UA.

A normal serum UA level is 2 – 6.5 mg/dL in females and 3.5 – 7.2 mg/dL in males. When UA accumulates in the blood, some patients remain asymptomatic (i.e., hyperuricemic without developing gout) while others may develop UA crystals in the joints (i.e., tophi), causing a painful gout attack with burning and swelling of the affected joint. Gout attacks have a sudden onset and typically occur in one joint, most often the metatarsophalangeal joint (MTP, the big toe). If left untreated, the attacks can occur repeatedly and damage the joints, tendons and other tissues.

In addition to a UA level, a sample of synovial (joint) fluid can be evaluated to identify if UA crystals are present. Certain imaging studies (e.g., X-ray, US, MRI, CT) can be used to view the affected joint.

RISK FACTORS

Risk factors for gout include male sex, obesity, excessive alcohol consumption (particularly beer), hypertension, chronic kidney disease (CKD), tumor lysis syndrome (see the Oncology chapter), lead intoxication, advanced age and using medications that increase UA (see Key Drugs Guy below).

DRUGS THAT INCREASE URIC ACID

Aspirin (lower doses)

Cyclosporine

Diuretics (loops and thiazides)

Niacin

Pyrazinamide

Select chemotherapy (with tumor lysis syndrome)

Changing the diet can lower the risk of gout. Foods to avoid include organ meats (e.g., liver, sweetbreads, tripe), high-fructose corn syrup and alcohol. Foods that should be limited include fruit juices, table sugar, sweetened drinks, desserts, salt, red meat (e.g., beef, lamb) and seafood with high purine content (e.g., sardines, shellfish). A healthy diet, including low-fat dairy products and vegetables, reduces gout risk. Weight control, smoking cessation, exercise and hydration are other ways to reduce risk.

DRUG TREATMENT

Asymptomatic hyperuricemia is not treated with drugs. Once a gout attack occurs, anti-inflammatory drugs are used to treat the pain and inflammation.

Preventative medications are considered after multiple gout attacks have occurred, if there is radiographic evidence of advanced disease or if there are tophi present. Prophylactic drugs, sometimes called urate-lowering therapy (ULT), are used to lower UA levels, with a goal UA level of < 6 mg/dL. Ideal treatment options include drugs that increase UA excretion or decrease UA production. See the Study Tip Gal below for an overview of treatments.

GOUT TREATMENT BASICS

Treat acute pain with anti-inflammatory drugs:

- Colchicine
- Steroids (including intra-articular injections)
- NSAIDs (often with a high starting dose)
- Interleukin-1 antagonists (reserved for refractory disease or intolerance to other treatments)

Treat chronically to prevent future attacks:

- Xanthine oxidase inhibitor (XOI): allopurinol (preferred) or febuxostat

An acute gout flare can occur when an XOI is started, so give initially with colchicine or an NSAID

If XOI didn't work well enough and UA remains > 6 mg/dL:

- Add on probenecid to daily XOI
- Replace the XOI with IV pegloticase

ACUTE GOUT ATTACK TREATMENT

Gout attacks are extremely painful; acute treatment should begin as soon as possible with an anti-inflammatory drug, such as an NSAID, a steroid or colchicine. If the gout attack is localized to one or two joints, an intra-articular steroid can be used (i.e., injected into the affected joint). For patients who cannot be treated with NSAIDs, colchicine or steroids, or have an inadequate response, an interleukin-1 antagonist (e.g., canakinumab) can be used. Patients on prophylactic treatment should continue the ULT during acute attacks. Applying topical ice to the affected joints can help alleviate pain and reduce inflammation.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Colchicine		
Colchicine ***(Colcrys,*** *Gloperba, Mitigare)* Tablet, oral solution, capsule + probenecid *Lodoco* is used for cardiovascular risk reduction (not gout)	**Treatment** 1.2 mg PO (i.e., two 0.6 mg tablets) followed by 0.6 mg in 1 hr (total dose of 1.8 mg on day 1) CrCl < 30 mL/min: the treatment dose is the same, but do not give again for 2 weeks **Prophylaxis (with ULT initiation)** 0.6 mg once or twice daily CrCl < 30 mL/min: ↓ to 0.3 mg/day	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Do not use in combination with a P-gp or strong CYP3A4 inhibitor with renal and/or hepatic impairment **WARNINGS** Myelosuppression; neuromuscular toxicity (including rhabdomyolysis), avoid use with cyclosporine, diltiazem, verapamil, gemfibrozil or statins due to ↑ myopathy risk **SIDE EFFECTS** Diarrhea, nausea, myopathy, neuropathy (dose-dependent), ↓ vitamin B12 **NOTES** Start within 36 hours of symptom onset (for treatment) Wait 12 hours after a treatment dose before resuming prophylaxis dosing ↑ risk of myelosuppression, GI and neuromuscular adverse effects in elderly with CrCl < 30 mL/min; ↓ dose and monitor, or use steroid as an alternative
NSAIDs		
Indomethacin ***(Indocin)***	50 mg PO TID	See Pain chapter for more information **NOTES** Avoid use in severe renal disease (UA is renally cleared and patients with gout often have renal insufficiency) and CVD risk, bleeding (risk is lower with short duration of use) Indomethacin, naproxen and sulindac are approved for gout; other NSAIDs can be used Celecoxib should be continued for 2-3 days after attack resolves, all others can be discontinued once pain resolves
Naproxen ***(Aleve,*** *Naprosyn,* others)	500 mg PO BID	
Sulindac	200 mg PO BID	
Celecoxib ***(Celebrex)***	200 mg PO BID	
Steroids: given PO, IM, IV or intra-articular		
Prednisone/ Prednisolone	30-40 mg/day until attack resolved, then taper (↓ by 5 mg daily) over 7-10 days	See Systemic Steroids & Autoimmune Disease chapter for more information **NOTES** Acute side effects include ↑ BG, ↑ BP, insomnia, ↑ appetite Intra-articular steroid injections stay localized and do not cause systemic side effects; repeat injections can cause joint damage
Methylprednisolone ***(Medrol, Solu-Medrol,*** *Depo-Medrol)*	If 1-2 joints: intra-articular Oral: dose pack	
Triamcinolone	If 1-2 joints: intra-articular If ≥ 3 joints: IM	

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Interleukin-1 Antagonist: for refractory gout or patients with contraindication/intolerance to other treatments		
Canakinumab *(Ilaris)* Injection	150 mg SC once (may be repeated in 12 weeks)	**SIDE EFFECTS** Nasopharyngitis, serious infections **NOTES** Must test for tuberculosis prior to initiation; avoid live vaccines

COLCHICINE DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Colchicine is a major substrate of CYP450 3A4 and P-gp. Fatal toxicity can occur if colchicine is combined with strong CYP3A4 inhibitors (e.g., clarithromycin) or a strong inhibitor of P-gp (e.g., cyclosporine). If colchicine is used with a strong CYP3A4 inhibitor, ↓ the colchicine dose and repeat no earlier than 3 days. If using with a moderate CYP3A4 inhibitor, do not exceed 1.2 mg (2 tablets) of colchicine for acute treatment.

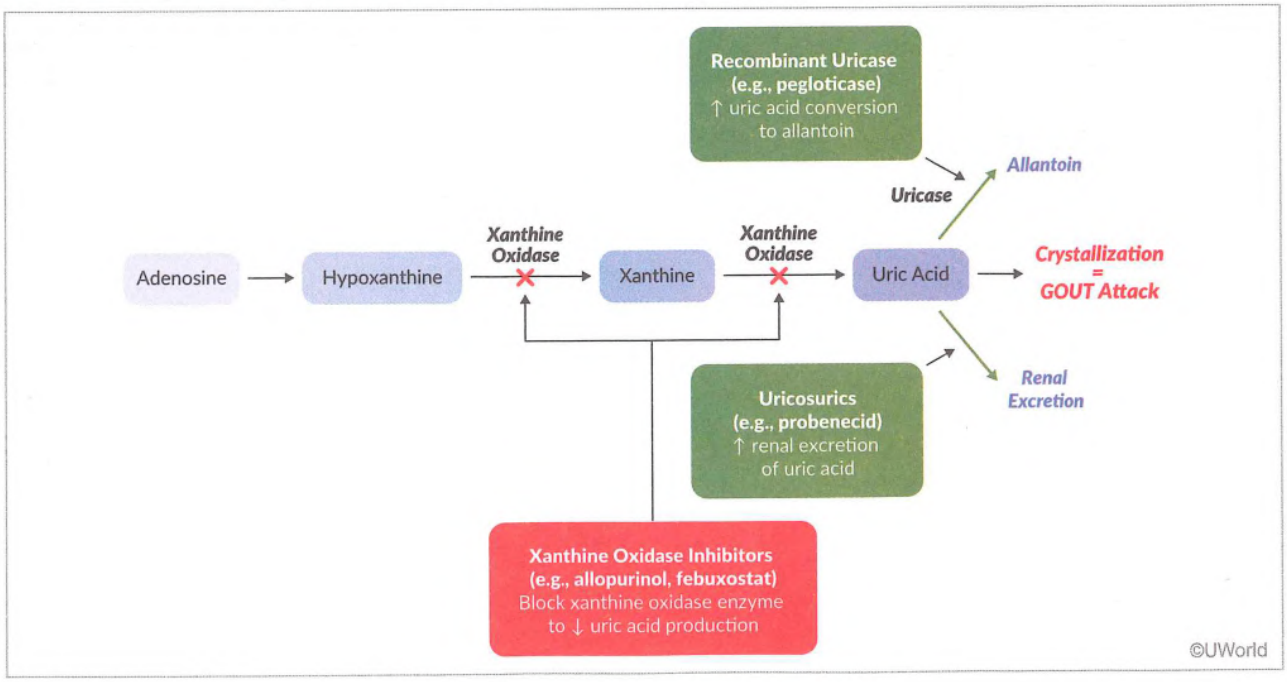
PROPHYLACTIC TREATMENT

Chronic ULT should be started in all patients who have multiple or frequent gout attacks, evidence of joint damage or tophi. When starting chronic ULT, colchicine, steroids or NSAIDs should be used to reduce the risk of attacks, which can occur when UA is lowered rapidly.

The first-line ULT is allopurinol, a xanthine oxidase inhibitor (XOI). Blocking the xanthine oxidase enzyme stops the production of UA. Febuxostat, another XOI, is available as an alternative. XOIs are titrated up slowly to lower the UA to a target level of < 6 mg/dL.

If XOIs are contraindicated or not tolerated, probenecid (a uricosuric) is a second-line treatment option; it can also be added when the UA level is not at goal despite maximal doses of XOIs. Probenecid inhibits reabsorption of UA in the proximal tubule of the nephron, which increases UA excretion. Note that adequate renal function is required for uricosurics to be effective. Pegloticase is a recombinant uricase enzyme; it converts UA to an inactive metabolite that can be easily excreted and is reserved for severe, refractory gout.

URIC ACID PRODUCTION AND DRUG TREATMENT



CHRONIC URATE LOWERING THERAPY

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Xanthine Oxidase Inhibitors: decrease uric acid production		
Allopurinol *(Zyloprim, Aloprim)* Tablet, injection	Start at 100 mg daily, then slowly titrate up until UA is < 6 mg/dL (doses > 300 mg should be divided BID) CrCl ≤ 30 mL/min: Start at lower dose, increase gradually Take after a meal to ↓ nausea	**WARNINGS** Hypersensitivity reactions, including severe rash (SJS/TEN, DRESS); HLA-B*5801 testing prior to use if high risk of hypersensitivity (e.g., patients of Asian descent, African American patients) and do not use drug if positive; hepatotoxicity; bone marrow suppression; nephrotoxicity **SIDE EFFECTS** Rash, gout flare, nausea, diarrhea, ↑ LFTs **MONITORING** CBC, LFTs, renal function **NOTES** Due to the high rate of gout attacks when beginning ULT, use with colchicine (0.6 mg once or twice daily) or an NSAID for the first 3-6 months Also used for tumor lysis syndrome, at higher doses (see Oncology chapter)
Febuxostat *(Uloric)* Tablet	Start at 40 mg daily, ↑ to 80 mg if UA not < 6 mg/dL at 2 weeks; max dose 120 mg/day CrCl < 30 mL/min: max dose 40 mg daily	**BOXED WARNING** ↑ risk of cardiovascular (CV) death compared to allopurinol in patients with CV disease; limit use to those who cannot tolerate allopurinol (e.g., hypersensitivity) or if allopurinol is not effective **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Do not use with mercaptopurine or azathioprine **WARNINGS** Hepatotoxicity, possible MI or stroke, gout flare, hypersensitivity and serious skin reactions (e.g., SJS/TEN, DRESS) **SIDE EFFECTS** Rash, nausea, ↑ LFTs, arthralgia **NOTES** Due to the high rate of gout attacks when beginning ULT, use with colchicine (0.6 mg once or twice daily) or an NSAID for the first 3-6 months
Uricosuric: inhibit reabsorption of uric acid in the kidneys, which ↑ uric acid excretion		
Probenecid Tablet + colchicine	Start 250 mg BID, can increase to 2 g/day CrCl < 30 mL/min: avoid use	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Do not use with aspirin therapy, blood dyscrasias, UA kidney stones (nephrolithiasis), children < 2 years, initiation in acute gout attack **WARNINGS** ↓ effectiveness with CrCl < 30 mL/min (ACR guidelines: do not use if CrCl < 50 mL/min),do not use with G6PD deficiency **SIDE EFFECTS** Hypersensitivity reactions, hemolytic anemia **NOTES** Probenecid can be used to ↑ beta-lactam levels by ↓ renal excretion

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Recombinant Uricase: converts uric acid to allantoin, which is excreted		
Pegloticase *(Krystexxa)* Injection	8 mg IV every 2 weeks	**BOXED WARNINGS** Anaphylactic reactions – monitor and premedicate with antihistamines and steroids, risk is greatest if UA is > 6 mg/dL; life-threatening hemolytic reactions and methemoglobinemia may occur with G6PD deficiency **CONTRAINDICATIONS** G6PD deficiency **NOTES** Acute gout flares can occur upon initiation; an NSAID or colchicine should be given 1 week prior to infusion and continued for at least 6 months Do not use in combination with allopurinol, febuxostat or probenecid (↑ risk of anaphylaxis)

XANTHINE OXIDASE INHIBITOR DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Allopurinol and febuxostat ↑ the concentration of mercaptopurine, the active metabolite of azathioprine. Do not use mercaptopurine or azathioprine with febuxostat, and use caution combining these with allopurinol (avoid or ↓ dose and monitor for toxicity).
- Antacids ↓ allopurinol absorption.
- Avoid use with pegloticase (↑ risk of anaphylaxis).

PROBENECID DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Probenecid reduces renal clearance of other medications, including aspirin, methotrexate, penicillins, cephalosporins and carbapenems.
- Probenecid can be used with beta-lactams to ↑ the concentration of the antibiotic; this will ↑ the risk of adverse reactions. This is occasionally done with penicillin, especially when treating neurosyphilis.
- Probenecid decreases the efficacy of loop diuretics but increases the risk of loop diuretic toxicity.
- Avoid use with pegloticase (↑ risk of anaphylaxis).

KEY COUNSELING POINTS

See the Drug Formulations and Patient Counseling chapter for counseling language/layman's terminology.

COLCHICINE

- At the first sign of an attack, take two tablets. Take one more tablet in one hour.
  - ☐ Do not take the second dose if you have upset stomach, nausea or diarrhea.
  - ☐ Do not use more than three tablets on day one.
- Can cause:
  - ☐ Nausea and diarrhea.
  - ☐ Muscle damage.

ALLOPURINOL

- Can cause:
  - ☐ Mild or severe rash.
  - ☐ Liver damage.
  - ☐ Nausea.
- Take after a meal to reduce stomach upset (higher doses can be divided). Drink plenty of fluids.

Select Guidelines/References

Fitzgerald JD, Dalbeth N, Mikuls T, et al. 2020 American College of Rheumatology Guideline for the Management of Gout. *Arthritis Care & Research*. 2020;0:1-17.

ONCOLOGY

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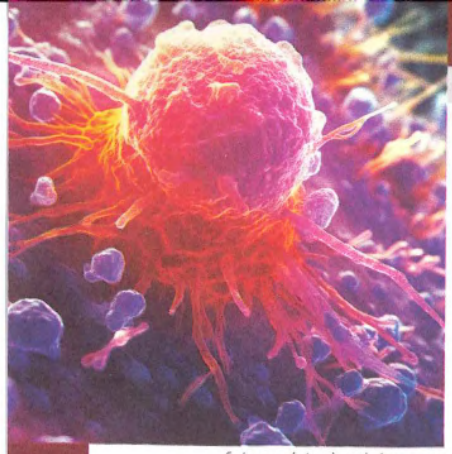

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CHAPTER 61

ONCOLOGY

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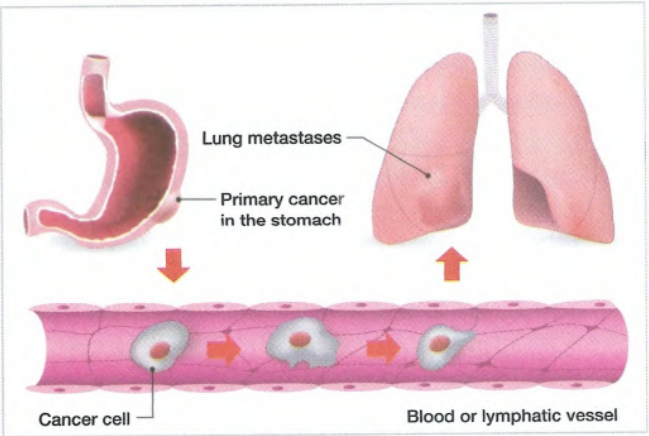
= Study Tip Gal = Required Formula

BACKGROUND

Under normal conditions, human cells grow and divide to form new cells. Cancer is a group of diseases characterized by abnormal cell proliferation, whereby the process of cell division is disrupted and cells divide uncontrollably. Many cancers form a tumor (mass of cells), which can be benign (non-cancerous) or malignant (cancerous).

- Benign tumors are relatively harmless and stay in their primary location.
- Malignant tumors can travel through the lymphatic system or blood to invade other tissues and form a secondary tumor with the same cancerous cells as the primary tumor.
- The spread of cancer to a different part of the body is referred to as metastasis.



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Cancer is caused by genetic mutations that can be inherited, occur due to errors during cell division, or result from DNA damage. The main types of genes involved in cancer include:

- Proto-oncogenes, which are involved in normal cell division. Mutated forms of proto-oncogenes, called oncogenes [e.g., human epidermal growth factor receptor 2 (HER2), epidermal growth factor receptor (EGFR)], promote cancer cell growth.
- DNA repair genes, which usually fix mistakes in DNA during replication. Mutations in these genes prevent cell repair, allowing more errors to accumulate within the cell.
- Tumor suppressor genes [e.g., breast cancer gene 1 (BRCA1), breast cancer gene 2 (BRCA2)], which normally regulate cell division; when these genes are inactivated by a mutation, cells can grow uncontrollably.

External factors, including lifestyle (e.g., tobacco use, excessive alcohol intake, poor diet, low physical activity) or environmental exposures (e.g., sunlight, chemicals, radiation, viruses), and internal factors (e.g., hormones, inherited genetic mutations, older age) can promote the development of cancer. In some cases, there is no identifiable cause.

CANCER PREVENTION

Certain cancers are more likely to occur following some type of exposure, such as lung cancer due to smoking or skin cancer caused by sun or ultraviolet (UV) light exposure.

General preventative measures to reduce external exposures or lower cancer risk include:

- Avoiding tobacco and limiting alcohol intake.
- Maintaining a healthy lifestyle (e.g., achieving an ideal weight, exercising regularly, eating a balanced diet).
- Receiving certain vaccinations [e.g., human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine].
- Low-dose aspirin (in select patients) to prevent colorectal cancer.
- Skin protection and screening for abnormal spots (see Lowering Skin Cancer Risk section below).
- Regular check-ups to assess cancer risk, family history and individual history.
- Following cancer screening recommendations (see table on following page).

LOWERING SKIN CANCER RISK

Skin cancer is one of the most common cancers in the United States. Most skin cancers start in the epidermis or top layer of the skin, which contains squamous cells, basal cells and melanocytes. Basal cell carcinoma is the most common type, followed by squamous cell carcinoma. Melanoma is less prevalent but is often invasive and more likely to spread.

Risk factors for skin cancer include a history of UV light exposure (from sun or tanning beds), light skin that burns easily, light hair color, a skin cancer history and immunosuppression (e.g., from drugs or conditions), because this limits the ability of the immune system to eliminate some early cancers.

SKIN PROTECTION

There are some simple methods to protect the skin from potential damage. Seek shade, especially between 10 AM and 4 PM. Use broad-spectrum sunscreen, at least SPF 30, and reapply every 2 hours. Wear a shirt (tightly woven fabrics are best), hat (with at least a 2 – 3" brim) and sunglasses (to protect the skin around the eyes).

ABCDE – WARNING SIGNS OF MELANOMA

The "ABCDE" mnemonic below is used to educate patients about suspicious skin spots. A spot that is changing over time or looks different from other spots should be examined.

A	B	C	D	E
ASYMMETRY One half of the mole does not match the other.	**BORDER** Edges are irregular and notched.	**COLOR** Color is not the same all over.	**DIAMETER** Larger than 6 mm, or the size of the tip of a pencil eraser.	**EVOLVING** Mole is changing in size, color, shape or symptoms are present (e.g., itching, bleeding).

Skin Cancer Foundation, National Cancer Institute

CANCER SCREENING GUIDELINES FOR AVERAGE RISK PATIENTS*

CANCER	SEX	AGE	SCREENING
Breast	F	40-44 years 45-54 years ≥ 55 years	Annual mammogram is optional Yearly mammogram Mammogram every 2 years or continue yearly
Cervical	F	25-65 years	Cervical cell analysis: ■ Pap smear every 3 years ■ HPV test every 5 years ■ Pap smear + HPV test every 5 years
Colorectal	M/F	≥ 45 years	Stool-based tests: ■ Highly sensitive fecal immunochemical test (FIT) yearly ■ Highly sensitive guaiac-based fecal occult blood test (gFOBT) yearly ■ Multi-targeted stool DNA test (MT-sDNA) every 3 years Visual exams of the colon and rectum: ■ Colonoscopy every 10 years (and as needed to confirm a positive result from any other test) ■ CT colonography (virtual colonoscopy) every 5 years ■ Flexible sigmoidoscopy (FSIG) every 5 years
Lung	M/F	50-80 years	Annual low-dose CT scan of the chest if a patient currently smokes or used to smoke and has at least a 20 pack-year smoking history.
Prostate	M	Individualized decision	If a patient chooses to be tested: ■ Prostate-specific antigen (PSA) blood test ■ +/– digital rectal exam (DRE)

*Per the American Cancer Society.

CANCER EVALUATION

WARNING SIGNS OF CANCER

There are several signs and symptoms of cancer; most are nonspecific (e.g., unexplained weight loss), but referral to a physician is warranted if any of these CAUTION warning signs are present:

Change in bowel or bladder habits

A sore that does not heal

Unusual bleeding or discharge

Thickening or lump in the breast or elsewhere

Indigestion or difficulty swallowing

Obvious change in a wart or mole (see ABCDE warning signs on previous page)

Nagging cough or hoarseness

CANCER DIAGNOSIS

A cancer diagnosis requires a complete patient evaluation, including a thorough history and physical and various tests based on the type of cancer suspected. The assessment of cancer also includes staging to determine the extent of disease. Cancer stages can be indicated by numbers, where stage I is early-stage cancer and stage IV indicates advanced disease. The TNM staging system is also applicable to the majority of cancer types in which T describes the primary tumor size and location, N refers to lymph node involvement and M represents evidence of metastasis.

EVALUATION OF CANCER

History and physical

Complete blood count

Comprehensive metabolic panel

Biopsy: removal of a tissue sample to identify cancer cells

Imaging tests (e.g., X-ray, MRI, PET scan, CT scan): visualizes internal body structures

Biomarker (tumor marker) tests: detects genes, proteins or other substances released by cancer cells

Genetic tests: identifies specific cancer genes or mutations

SELECT CANCER TYPES

There are hundreds of cancer types. Cancers are classified by the organs or tissues where they originated or can be described by the type of cell that formed them (e.g., epithelial cell, squamous cell). The table below describes some of the more common cancer types.

NAME	CHARACTERISTICS
Carcinoma	Forms from epithelial cells that line internal and external surfaces of the body.
Leukemia	Originates in the bone marrow and usually affects leukocytes.
Lymphoma	Begins in the cells of the lymphatic system.
Multiple myeloma	Arises from plasma cells of the bone marrow.
Sarcoma	Develops in connective or supportive tissue (e.g., muscle, bone, cartilage).

TREATMENT OVERVIEW

Cancer treatment decisions are based on:

- Cancer type and characteristics (e.g., a breast tumor that is estrogen receptor-positive will receive different treatment than a breast tumor that is estrogen receptor-negative).
- Cancer stage (i.e., the size and how far it has metastasized, or spread).
- Patient characteristics, such as age, comorbidities, past treatments and physical functioning (i.e., performance status), which can be assessed with the Karnofsky or Eastern Cooperative Oncology Group (ECOG) rating scales.
- Risks and benefits of each treatment option (i.e., efficacy vs. tolerability of chemotherapy and/or surgery).

Each patient's treatment goals should be discussed with their healthcare team. Treatment options with curative intent are used to eradicate cancerous cells and prevent recurrence.

If cure is not possible, palliative treatment can help control symptoms and provide comfort. A patient's quality of life may lead the clinician and family to choose palliative measures over a more aggressive treatment plan that could have intolerable side effects.

TREATMENT TYPES

Cancer can be treated with radiation (high-energy X-rays to destroy cancer cells), surgery, chemotherapy, hormone therapy, targeted therapy and/or immunotherapy. Primary cancer treatment aims to completely remove or eliminate cancer cells; any treatment modality can be used, but surgery (to remove the bulk of the tumor) is a common primary treatment for resectable cancers.

Neoadjuvant therapy (e.g., radiation, chemotherapy) can be used before surgery to shrink the tumor and make complete resection more likely. Adjuvant therapy is additional cancer treatment given after the primary treatment (i.e., surgery) to eradicate residual disease and decrease recurrence.

TREATMENT RESPONSE

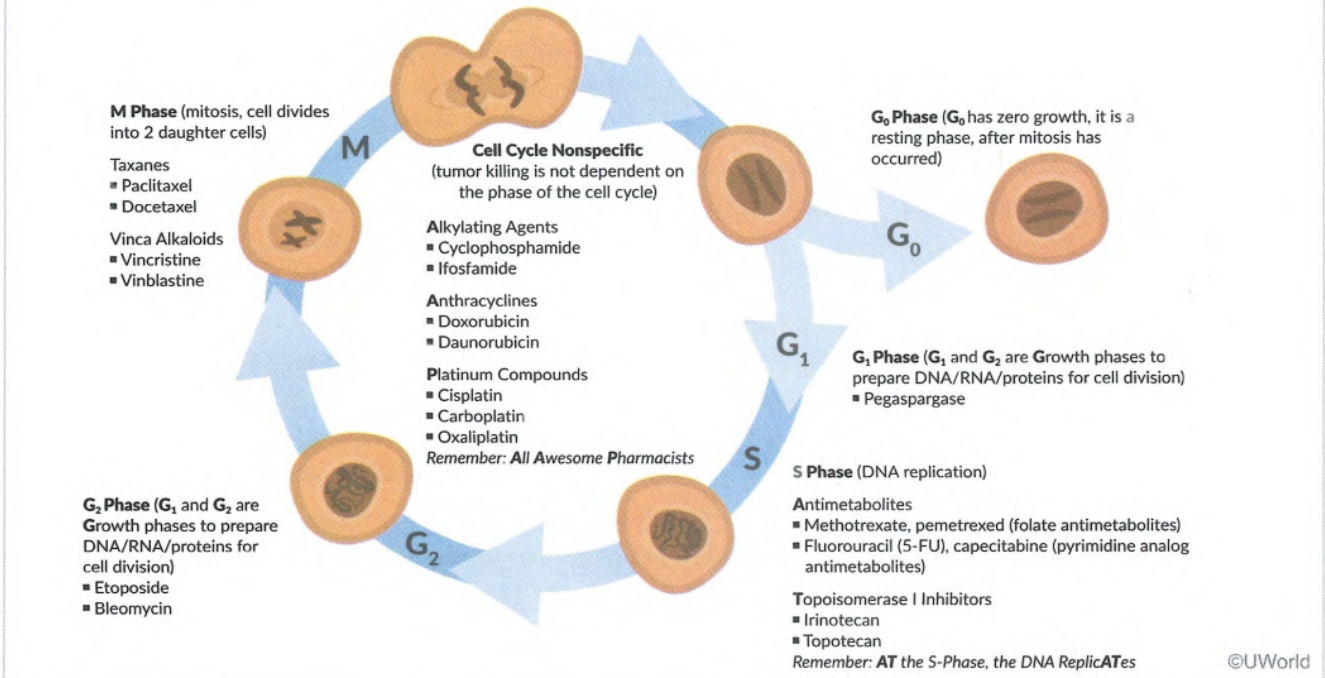
- Complete response, or complete remission: the cancer responded to treatment and cannot be detected.
- Partial response, or partial remission: there is a substantial reduction in the cancer burden, but it is still present.
- Progressive disease: the cancer has grown or is worsening.
- Stable disease: the cancer is not improving or is worsening.

CHEMOTHERAPY

Traditional chemotherapy drugs kill cancer cells (i.e., they are cytotoxic) by interfering with cell division and DNA replication. Cell cycle nonspecific agents kill cancer cells at all phases of the cell cycle, whereas cell cycle specific agents kill cancer cells during a specific phase of the cell cycle (see figure below). Regardless of the cell cycle specificity, traditional cytotoxic cancer drugs are more effective at killing actively dividing cells; therefore, cancers that are characterized by rapid cell growth are more susceptible to their cytotoxic effects.

Noncancerous cells in the body that are rapidly dividing, including cells in the gastrointestinal tract, hair follicles and bone marrow, are also susceptible to the damaging effects of cytotoxic drugs. This is why common chemotherapy side effects include diarrhea, mucositis, nausea/vomiting, alopecia and myelosuppression, and why supportive care measures (e.g., an antiemetic regimen) are used in conjunction with chemotherapy.

Chemotherapy and the Cell Cycle Phases

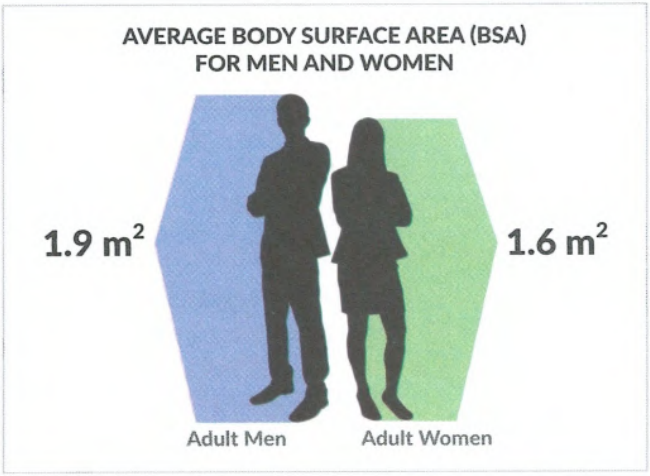


CHEMOTHERAPY REGIMENS

Chemotherapy regimens often combine drugs to achieve synergistic effects by targeting cells at different stages of replication. Regimens are usually administered in 2 – 6 week cycles, with days or weeks in between treatment to allow for recovery from any adverse effects (e.g., myelosuppression, nausea/vomiting).

CHEMOTHERAPY CALCULATIONS

Most chemotherapy is dosed using body surface area (BSA), except carboplatin, which is dosed using the Calvert formula. The BSA formulas used most commonly are the Mosteller and Du Bois and Du Bois equations. Use the patient's actual body weight for dose calculations, unless instructed otherwise.



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MOSTELLER EQUATION

$$BSA\ (m^2) = \sqrt{\frac{Ht\ (cm) \times Wt\ (kg)}{3{,}600}}$$

Example

A patient weighs 175 pounds and is 6' 1" tall. Calculate the patient's BSA using the Mosteller equation. Round to the nearest hundredth.

Convert weight to kg: 175 lbs/2.2 = 79.5 kg

Convert height to cm: 73 in × 2.54 = 185.4 cm

$$BSA\ (m^2) = \sqrt{\frac{185.4\ cm \times 79.5\ kg}{3{,}600}} = 2.02\ m^2$$

Calculate this patient's dose of paclitaxel in milligrams if the prescribed dose is 175 mg/m². Round to the nearest whole number.

$$175\ mg/m^2 \times 2.02\ m^2 = 354\ mg$$

DU BOIS AND DU BOIS EQUATION

$$BSA\ (m^2) = 0.007184 \times [Ht\ (cm)]^{0.725} \times [Wt\ (kg)]^{0.425}$$

Example

A patient weighs 165 pounds and has a height of 5' 6". Calculate the patient's BSA using the Du Bois and Du Bois equation. Round to the nearest hundredth.

Convert weight to kg: 165 lbs/2.2 = 75 kg

Convert height to cm: 66 inches × 2.54 = 167.6 cm

$$BSA\ (m^2) = 0.007184 \times (167.6\ cm)^{0.725} \times (75\ kg)^{0.425}$$

$$BSA\ (m^2) = 1.84\ m^2$$

CALVERT FORMULA

In the formula below (used for carboplatin dosing):

- AUC can range from 2 – 8 mg/mL × min
- GFR is commonly capped at 125 mL/min/1.73 m²
- Creatinine clearance may be used to estimate GFR (if GFR is not available)

$$Total\ carboplatin\ dose\ (mg) = (Target\ AUC) \times (GFR + 25)$$

Example

CA is a 55-year-old female with newly diagnosed ovarian cancer. She arrives at the clinic to start her first cycle of chemotherapy. Her laboratory values are within normal limits, and her GFR is 80 mL/min/1.73 m². Her regimen for day 1 of chemotherapy is:

Paclitaxel 175 mg/m² IV, followed by carboplatin (target AUC 5 mg/mL × min) IV

CA's carboplatin dose using the Calvert formula is:

$$(5\ mg/mL \times min) \times (80\ mL/min/1.73\ m^2 + 25) = 525\ mg$$

TRADITIONAL CYTOTOXIC CHEMOTHERAPY DRUGS

The following tables include commonly encountered "prototype drugs" from the major chemotherapy drug classes. The monitoring, prevention and/or treatment of their unique safety concerns are described, including the use of available chemoprotectants (i.e., medications that reduce toxicity without compromising the chemotherapeutic effect) when appropriate. Management of some safety concerns may also include the need to modify chemotherapy doses or stop/interrupt treatment.

Common chemotherapy-related adverse effects (e.g., myelosuppression, nausea/vomiting) and safety issues (e.g., extravasation) that require special management are discussed later in the chapter and are not included in the tables below.

CELL CYCLE NONSPECIFIC AGENTS

ALKYLATING AGENTS

Alkylating agents work by cross-linking DNA strands, which inhibits DNA and protein synthesis and results in cell death.

SELECT DRUGS*	SAFETY CONCERNS	MONITORING	MANAGEMENT
Cyclophosphamide **Ifosfamide** *(Ifex)*	Hemorrhagic cystitis, caused by the toxic metabolite acrolein, which concentrates in the bladder	Hematuria Urinalysis (for RBCs) Lower urinary tract symptoms (e.g., dysuria, incomplete bladder emptying, urinary urgency)	**Prevention** ■ Adequate hydration ■ Mesna (a chemoprotectant) with all ifosfamide doses and high cyclophosphamide doses (e.g., > 1 gram/m^2) **Treatment** ■ Bladder irrigation with normal saline
	Ifosfamide: neurotoxicity, including encephalopathy and cerebellar dysfunction	S/sx of neurotoxicity (e.g., confusion, incoordination, imbalance)	**Prevention/Treatment** ■ Methylene blue
Busulfan *(Busulfex, Myleran)*	Pulmonary toxicity (e.g., pulmonary fibrosis)	S/sx of pulmonary toxicity (e.g., dyspnea, cough), pulmonary function tests	**Treatment** ■ Symptomatic care (e.g., oxygen)
	Seizures	S/sx of seizures (e.g., tonic-clonic movements, lack of awareness)	**Prevention/Treatment** ■ Antiseizure medication (e.g., levetiracetam)
Carmustine *(BiCNU, Gliadel Wafer)*	Neurotoxicity (e.g., seizures, cerebral edema), particularly with the wafer implant formulation	S/sx of seizures, headache	**Prevention/Treatment** ■ Antiseizure medication
	Pulmonary toxicity (e.g., pulmonary fibrosis)	S/sx of pulmonary toxicity, pulmonary function tests	**Treatment** ■ Symptomatic care (e.g., oxygen)

**Other drugs in class: bendamustine, dacarbazine, lomustine, mechlorethamine, melphalan, mitomycin, procarbazine, temozolomide.*

PLATINUM-BASED COMPOUNDS

Platinum-based compounds are alkylating agents that cross-link DNA, interfering with DNA synthesis and cell replication, which results in cell death.

DRUGS	SAFETY CONCERNS	MONITORING	MANAGEMENT
Cisplatin* Carboplatin Oxaliplatin	Hypersensitivity reactions	S/sx of anaphylaxis (e.g., dyspnea, urticaria, angioedema) Vital signs (e.g., BP, HR)	**Treatment** ■ Symptomatic care (e.g., oxygen, bronchodilators, systemic steroids)
	Nephrotoxicity	Renal function (e.g., BUN, SCr, intake/output), Electrolytes (e.g., Mg, K, Na, Ca)	**Prevention** ■ Adequate hydration ■ Amifostine (a chemoprotectant) reduces cumulative renal toxicity with cisplatin ■ Limit cisplatin dose per cycle to ≤ 100 mg/m^2
	Ototoxicity	S/sx of hearing loss or tinnitus Audiogram at baseline	**Prevention** ■ Avoid concomitant ototoxic medications (e.g., aminoglycosides)
	Peripheral neuropathy	S/sx of neuropathy (e.g., extremity numbness, paresthesia, pain)	**Treatment** ■ Symptomatic care (e.g., neuropathic pain medications)
	Oxaliplatin: acute sensory neuropathy exacerbated by cold	S/sx of acute sensory neuropathy [e.g., abnormal sensations (in hands, feet, perioral area, or throat), jaw spasm, chest pressure]	**Prevention** ■ Avoid cold exposure (e.g., cold temperatures, consumption of cold food/beverages)

**Greatest incidence of nephrotoxicity and ototoxicity.*

ANTHRACYCLINES

Anthracyclines work by several mechanisms, including intercalation into DNA, inhibition of topoisomerase II and creation of oxygen-free radicals that damage cells.

SELECT DRUGS*	SAFETY CONCERNS	MONITORING	MANAGEMENT
Doxorubicin NAME TIP... Generic name contains "**-rubi-**" (remember ruby red body fluids)	Cardiotoxicity (e.g., heart failure, cardiomyopathy)	Left ventricular ejection fraction (LVEF) S/sx of heart failure (e.g., edema, shortness of breath)	**Prevention** ■ Limit total lifetime cumulative dose to 450-550 mg/m^2 ■ Administer dexrazoxane (a chemoprotectant) in select patients ■ See Study Tip Gal on next page for further details
	Red discoloration of bodily fluids	S/sx (e.g., red urine)	**Prevention** ■ None
Mitoxantrone (an anthracenedione, related to the anthracyclines)	Blue discoloration of sclera and bodily fluids	S/sx (e.g., blue urine)	**Prevention** ■ None

**Other drugs in class: daunorubicin, epirubicin, idarubicin.*

REDUCE DOXORUBICIN CARDIOTOXICITY

1. Keep track of the lifetime cumulative doxorubicin dose for each patient
   (doxorubicin dose in mg/m^2/cycle) × (total number of cycles) = cumulative doxorubicin dose in mg/m^2
   Example: (doxorubicin 50 mg/m^2/cycle) × (6 cycles) = 300 mg/m^2
2. When the doxorubicin cumulative dose is ≥ 300 mg/m^2 with planned continued treatment, consider dexrazoxane
3. When the doxorubicin cumulative dose reaches 450-550 mg/m^2, treatment must be stopped (the lower end of the dose range is used if CV risk or previous mediastinal radiation)
4. Monitor LVEF before and after treatment (using an echocardiogram or MUGA scan)

CELL CYCLE SPECIFIC AGENTS

TOPOISOMERASE I INHIBITORS

Topoisomerase I inhibitors block the coiling and uncoiling of the double-stranded DNA helix during the S phase of the cell cycle. This causes single and double-strand breaks in the DNA and prevents religation (sealing the DNA strands back together again) of single-strand breaks.

SELECT DRUG*	SAFETY CONCERNS	MONITORING	MANAGEMENT
Irinotecan *(Camptosar)* **NAME TIP...** "I run to the can"	Acute diarrhea, during or immediately after infusion, plus cholinergic symptoms (e.g., abdominal cramping, lacrimation, salivation) Delayed diarrhea (> 24 hours after infusion)	Frequency of bowel movements Electrolytes (e.g., K, Mg) Dehydration (e.g., dizziness, decreased skin turgor)	**Prevention** ■ Acute diarrhea: atropine (an anticholinergic) **Treatment** ■ Acute diarrhea: atropine ■ Delayed diarrhea: antidiarrheal agent (e.g., loperamide) ■ Both: symptomatic care (e.g., hydration, electrolyte replacement)

**Other drug in class: topotecan.*

TOPOISOMERASE II INHIBITORS

Similar to topoisomerase I inhibitors, topoisomerase II inhibitors block the coiling and uncoiling of double-stranded DNA, but during the G2 phase of the cell cycle; this causes single and double-strand breaks in the DNA and prevents religation of single-strand breaks.

DRUG	SAFETY CONCERNS	MONITORING	MANAGEMENT
Etoposide	Infusion rate-related hypotension	Vital signs (e.g., BP)	**Prevention** ■ Infuse over at least 30-60 minutes **Treatment** ■ IV hydration, decrease infusion rate upon reinitiation

VINCA ALKALOIDS

Vinca alkaloids inhibit microtubule formation during the M phase of the cell cycle. Microtubules play a role in axonal transport, which is why neuropathies are a common side effect of these medications.

NAME TIP...

- VinCristine causes more CNS toxicity (neuropathy) than other vinca alkaloids
- VinBlastine and vinorelBine cause more Bone marrow suppression (myelosuppression) than vincristine

DRUGS	SAFETY CONCERNS	MONITORING	MANAGEMENT
Vincristine* Vinblastine Vinorelbine	Peripheral neuropathy	S/sx of neuropathy (e.g., extremity numbness, paresthesia, pain)	**Prevention** ■ Limit single vincristine doses to 2 mg (regardless of BSA-calculated dose) **Treatment** ■ Symptomatic care (e.g., neuropathic pain medications)
	Autonomic neuropathy (e.g., constipation)	S/sx of constipation (e.g., bowel movement frequency, hard stools)	**Prevention/Treatment** ■ Symptomatic care (e.g., diet modifications, laxatives)
	Paralysis and death if given intrathecally **FOR INTRAVENOUS USE ONLY. FATAL IF GIVEN BY OTHER ROUTES.**	Double check appropriate preparation of product	**Prevention** ■ Prepare in small IV bag (i.e., a piggyback) that cannot be used for intrathecal administration ■ Label products to prevent accidental intrathecal administration

**Major CYP3A4 substrate; avoid interacting drugs (e.g., azole antifungals).*

TAXANES

Taxanes inhibit the depolymerization of tubulin (which stabilizes microtubules) during the M phase of the cell cycle.

DRUGS	SAFETY CONCERNS	MONITORING	MANAGEMENT
Paclitaxel Cabazitaxel *(Jevtana)* Docetaxel *(Docivyx)* Use non-PVC bag and tubing* Use 0.22 micron filter (cabazitaxel and paclitaxel)	Peripheral neuropathy	S/sx of neuropathy (e.g., extremity numbness, paresthesia, pain)	**Treatment** ■ Symptomatic care (e.g., neuropathic pain medications)
	Hypersensitivity reactions (due to solvent systems)*	S/sx of anaphylaxis (e.g., dyspnea, urticaria, angioedema) Vital signs (e.g., BP, HR)	**Prevention** ■ Premedication with a systemic steroid (e.g., dexamethasone), diphenhydramine and an H2RA (e.g., famotidine) **Treatment** ■ Stop/interrupt therapy; do not rechallenge if reaction is severe ■ Symptomatic care (e.g., epinephrine)
	Docetaxel: severe fluid retention	S/sx of fluid retention (e.g. edema, dyspnea at rest, abdominal distension)	**Prevention** ■ Premedication with a systemic steroid (e.g., dexamethasone) **Treatment** ■ Symptomatic care (e.g., diuretics)

**Except albumin-bound paclitaxel (Abraxane).*

CASE SCENARIO

LK is a 34-year-old male with testicular cancer, hypertension and chronic back pain. His current medications include hydrochlorothiazide 25 mg PO daily, naproxen 500 mg PO BID and hydrocodone/acetaminophen 5/325 mg PO Q4H PRN pain. He received his 3rd cycle of chemotherapy with:

Paclitaxel 250 mg/m^2 IV on day 1
Ifosfamide 1,500 mg/m^2 IV on days 2-5 (along with mesna)
Cisplatin 25 mg/m^2 IV on days 2-5

He returns to the clinic to receive his 4th cycle of chemotherapy and complains of numbness and tingling pain in his fingertips. His laboratory values are within normal limits with the exception of: BUN = 22 mg/dL, SCr = 2.4 mg/dL. His vital signs are within normal limits and stable.

- **How would you characterize the type of pain LK describes?** It is consistent with sensory peripheral neuropathy.
- **What could be causing his new pain symptoms?** Paclitaxel and cisplatin are associated with sensory peripheral neuropathy.
- **Dehydration is ruled out based on the BUN/SCr ratio and normal vital signs. What is the likely cause of LK's elevated SCr?** Cisplatin-induced nephrotoxicity should be suspected. No further cisplatin should be given at this time. Naproxen and hydrochlorothiazide should be held, as NSAIDs can decrease renal blood flow and diuretics can cause dehydration and potentiate further kidney damage. An alternative medication can be chosen for BP control.

PYRIMIDINE ANALOG ANTIMETABOLITES

These agents inhibit pyrimidine DNA synthesis during the S phase of the cell cycle. Leucovorin or its L-isomer (levoleucovorin) is given with fluorouracil to ↑ efficacy.

SELECT DRUGS*	SAFETY CONCERNS	MONITORING	MANAGEMENT
Fluorouracil (also referred to as 5-FU) **Capecitabine** *(Xeloda)* Oral prodrug of fluorouracil	Hand-foot syndrome (palmar plantar erythrodysesthesia), caused by capillary drug leakage into the palms of the hands and soles of the feet	S/sx of hand-foot syndrome (e.g., painful erythema, skin peeling)	**Prevention/Treatment** ■ See Hand-Foot Syndrome Management box on next page
	Diarrhea	Frequency of bowel movements Electrolytes (e.g., K, Mg) Dehydration (e.g., dizziness, decreased skin turgor)	**Treatment** ■ Antidiarrheal agents (e.g., loperamide) ■ Symptomatic care (e.g., hydration, electrolyte replacement)
	Mucositis	S/sx of mucositis (e.g., painful mouth ulcers, difficulty eating/drinking) S/sx of infection (e.g., thrush)	**Prevention/Treatment** ■ See Mucositis Management box later in this section
	Dihydropyrimidine dehydrogenase (DPD) deficiency: ↑ risk of severe toxicity (e.g., myelosuppression, GI toxicity)	S/sx of toxicities	**Prevention** ■ Pharmacogenomic testing (not routine) **Treatment** ■ Antidote: use uridine triacetate *(Vistogard)* within 96 hours for overdose or early-onset toxicity ■ Symptomatic care (specific to the toxicity)
	Drug interaction with warfarin (can significantly ↑ INR)	INR, s/sx of bleeding	**Prevention** ■ Frequent INR monitoring
Cytarabine	Neurotoxicity (e.g., acute cerebellar toxicity with high doses)	S/sx of neurotoxicity (e.g., seizure, slurred speech, confusion, incoordination)	**Prevention** ■ Dose modifications for select patients (e.g., older age, pre-existing renal/hepatic dysfunction)
	Cytarabine syndrome occurring hours following administration	S/sx of cytarabine syndrome (e.g., fever, weakness, bone pain, chest pain)	**Prevention/Treatment** ■ Systemic steroids (e.g., dexamethasone)

**Other drug in class: gemcitabine.*

HAND-FOOT SYNDROME MANAGEMENT

- Limit or modify daily activities to reduce friction and pressure to hands and feet (e.g., wear loose-fitting shoes, avoid tools that require squeezing hands).
- Avoid heat exposure to hands and feet (e.g., take shorter showers in lukewarm water).
- Cold compresses may provide temporary relief of pain and tenderness.
- Use emollients (e.g., ammonium lactate, urea cream, *Aquaphor)* to retain moisture in the hands and feet.
- Topical steroids (e.g., clobetasol) and pain medications can help lessen inflammation and pain.
- Dose modifications or therapy interruptions may be required for severe cases.

FOLATE ANTIMETABOLITES

Folate antimetabolites interfere with the enzymes involved in the folic acid cycle, blocking purine and pyrimidine biosynthesis during the S phase of the cell cycle.

SELECT DRUG*	SAFETY CONCERNS	MONITORING	MANAGEMENT
Methotrexate**	Nephrotoxicity (with high doses ≥ 500 mg/m^2)	Renal function (e.g., BUN, SCr, urine output) Weight gain (edema) Urine pH Methotrexate levels	**Prevention** ■ Leucovorin or levoleucovorin "rescue" (see Study Tip Gal on next page) ■ Hydration with IV sodium bicarbonate to alkalinize the urine (improves methotrexate solubility) ■ Avoid interacting medications (e.g., NSAIDs, salicylates, beta-lactams, proton pump inhibitors, sulfonamide antibiotics, probenecid) ■ Caution in patients with third spacing (e.g., ascites, pleural effusions), which can delay drug clearance **Treatment** ■ Antidote: glucarpidase *(Voraxaze)* rapidly lowers methotrexate levels in patients with methotrexate-induced acute kidney injury and delayed methotrexate clearance
	Gastrointestinal toxicity (e.g., diarrhea, mucositis)	Same as pyrimidine analog antimetabolites (see diarrhea and mucositis sections in table on prior page)	**Prevention/Treatment** ■ Same as pyrimidine analog antimetabolites (see table on prior page and Mucositis Management box on next page) PLUS ■ Leucovorin or levoleucovorin "rescue" for high-dose methotrexate (see Study Tip Gal on next page)

**Other drugs in class: pemetrexed, pralatrexate.*

***Can also cause hepatotoxicity and photosensitivity, especially with prolonged use for chronic conditions (e.g., rheumatoid arthritis, psoriasis).*

WHICH FOLATE PRODUCT TO USE WITH METHOTREXATE

IN AUTOIMMUNE DISEASES

- The dose of methotrexate is much lower (5-25 mg WEEKLY)
- Folic acid (folate) 1-5 mg daily is recommended prophylactically to reduce methotrexate side effects (GI, hematologic, hepatic)
- Leucovorin is NOT used unless unresponsive to folic acid

IN ONCOLOGIC DISEASES

- Methotrexate doses are much higher (e.g., ≥ 40 mg/m^2 per dose)
- Leucovorin or levoleucovorin "rescue" is required for doses ≥ 500 mg/m^2 to reduce toxicities (e.g., mucositis, diarrhea, nephrotoxicity, myelosuppression)
  - Allows DNA synthesis to begin again by competing with methotrexate for transport into tissues and replenishing the supply of folate metabolites displaced by methotrexate
- Folic acid is NOT effective for high-dose methotrexate rescue

MUCOSITIS MANAGEMENT

PREVENTION

- Good oral hygiene (e.g., brushing with a soft toothbrush)
- Hold ice chips in the mouth (can cause local vasoconstriction, leading to decreased delivery of mucotoxic agents)
- Frequent rinsing with bland rinses (e.g., sodium bicarbonate or sodium chloride solutions)

TREATMENT

- Continue good oral hygiene and frequent rinsing
- Symptomatic care (e.g., viscous lidocaine 2%, magic mouthwash, systemic analgesics for pain)
- Parenteral nutrition or IV hydration may be needed in some cases
- Thrush treatment (e.g., nystatin oral suspension, clotrimazole troches) if indicated

MISCELLANEOUS CHEMOTHERAPY AGENTS

DRUGS	SAFETY CONCERNS	MONITORING	MANAGEMENT
Retinoic Acid Derivative: ↓ proliferation and ↑ differentiation of acute promyelocytic leukemia (APL) cells.			
Tretinoin (also referred to as all-*trans* retinoic acid, or ATRA)	Differentiation syndrome, previously known as retinoic acid-acute promyelocytic leukemia (RA-APL) syndrome	S/sx of differentiation syndrome (e.g., fever, dyspnea, weight gain, edema, pulmonary infiltrates, pericardial or pleural effusions)	**Prevention/Treatment** ■ Systemic steroids (e.g., dexamethasone) ■ Interrupt therapy for severe cases
Arsenic Trioxide: ↑ apoptosis of APL cells and damages the fusion protein promyelocytic leukemia-retinoic acid receptor alpha (PML-RARA).			
Arsenic trioxide *(Trisenox)*	QT prolongation	Electrocardiogram to assess QTc interval Electrolytes (e.g., K, Mg)	**Prevention** ■ Maintain K > 4 mEq/L and Mg > 1.8 mEq/L ■ Avoid concurrent QT-prolonging drugs
	Differentiation syndrome	S/sx of differentiation syndrome	**Prevention/Treatment** ■ Same as for tretinoin (see above)

DRUGS	SAFETY CONCERNS	MONITORING	MANAGEMENT
Antitumor Antibiotic: inhibits DNA synthesis via DNA strand breaks.			
Bleomycin	Pulmonary toxicity (e.g., pulmonary fibrosis)	S/sx of pulmonary toxicity (e.g., dyspnea, cough) Pulmonary function tests	**Prevention** ■ Limit lifetime cumulative dose to 400 units
	Hypersensitivity reactions	S/sx of anaphylaxis (e.g., dyspnea, urticaria, angioedema) Vital signs (e.g., BP, HR)	**Prevention** ■ Can consider a test dose for the first 2 doses and/or premedication (e.g., acetaminophen, diphenhydramine)
Proteasome Inhibitors: inhibit proteasomes, which help regulate intracellular protein homeostasis by inhibiting cell cycle progression and inducing apoptosis.			
Bortezomib *(Velcade)* Carfilzomib *(Kyprolis)*	Herpes reactivation (zoster and simplex)	S/sx of herpes infection (e.g., rash)	**Prevention/Treatment** ■ Antiviral agents (e.g., acyclovir, valacyclovir)
	Peripheral neuropathy	S/sx of neuropathy (e.g., extremity numbness, paresthesia, pain)	**Prevention** ■ Administer bortezomib SC (less neuropathy than IV administration) **Treatment** ■ Symptomatic care (e.g., neuropathic pain medications)
Immunomodulators: block angiogenesis (i.e., the formation of new blood cells) and kill abnormal cells in the bone marrow while stimulating the bone marrow to produce normal healthy cells.			
Lenalidomide *(Revlimid)* Pomalidomide *(Pomalyst)* Thalidomide *(Thalomid)*	Severe birth defects	Pregnancy test (2 negative test results required before treatment initiation)	**Prevention** ■ Only available under a restricted distribution program: patient, prescriber and pharmacist must be registered with the REMS program ■ Two forms of contraception or abstain from sex
	Thrombosis (DVT/PE)	S/sx of thromboembolism (e.g., shortness of breath, chest pain, leg swelling)	**Prevention** ■ Prophylactic anticoagulation (choice based on patient's underlying risk factors)
Asparaginase Product: inhibits protein synthesis by depleting asparagine in leukemic cells.			
Pegaspargase *(Oncaspar)* Modified form of L-asparaginase (derived from *E. coli)* conjugated with polyethylene glycol	Hypersensitivity reactions (pegylated form allows for less frequent dosing and less allergic reactions)	S/sx of anaphylaxis (e.g., dyspnea, angioedema, urticaria), vital signs (e.g., BP, HR)	**Prevention** ■ Premedication with acetaminophen, an antihistamine (e.g., diphenhydramine) and an H2RA (e.g., famotidine) **Treatment** ■ Symptomatic care (e.g., oxygen, epinephrine)

SUMMARY OF CHEMOTHERAPY TOXICITIES

CHEMOMAN AND MAJOR TOXICITIES OF COMMON CHEMOTHERAPY DRUGS

Chemoman helps with learning the major toxicities of some common chemotherapy drugs. Use the following blank version to practice by filling in the body parts with the drugs, associated toxicities and prevention measures.

N **Neurotoxicity:** carmustine

C **Cisplatin:** ototoxicity, high emetogenicity, nephrotoxicity

- Prevention (nephrotoxicity)
  - Amifostine
  - Limit dose per cycle to ≤ 100mg/m^2

M **Mucositis:** methotrexate, fluorouracil, capecitabine

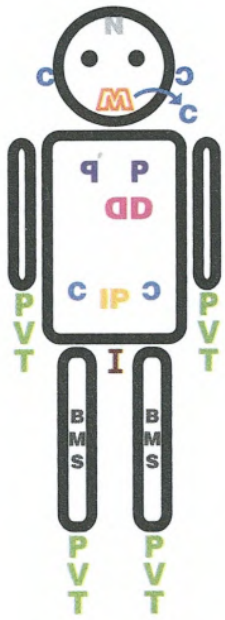
- Prevention (high-dose methotrexate): leucovorin

P **Pulmonary toxicity** (e.g., pulmonary fibrosis): bleomycin, busulfan, carmustine

- Prevention (bleomycin): limit lifetime cumulative dose to 400 units

D **Doxorubicin & other anthracyclines:** cardiotoxicity (e.g., cardiomyopathy)

- Prevention (doxorubicin):
  - Dexrazoxane
  - Limit lifetime cumulative dose to 450-550 mg/m^2



IP **Ifosfamide & cyclophosphamide:** hemorrhagic cystitis

- Prevention (all doses of ifosfamide & high doses of cyclophosphamide): mesna

I **Irinotecan:** diarrhea

- Prevention: atropine

P V T **Platinum-based compounds** (e.g., oxaliplatin), **vinca alkaloids** (e.g., vincristine) & **taxanes** (e.g., paclitaxel): peripheral neuropathy

- Prevention (oxaliplatin): avoid cold exposure
- Prevention (vincristine): limit single doses to 2 mg

B M S **Bone marrow suppression:** most chemotherapy EXCEPT bleomycin, pegaspargase & vincristine

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CHEMOMAN AND MAJOR TOXICITIES OF COMMON CHEMOTHERAPY DRUGS

TEST YOURSELF!

LABEL (on Chemoman)	DRUGS/TOXICITY	PREVENTION
N		
C		
M		
P		
D		
IP		
I		
PVT		
BMS		

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CHEMOTHERAPY-RELATED ISSUES AND SUPPORTIVE CARE

MYELOSUPPRESSION OVERVIEW

Within the bone marrow, the process of hematopoiesis generates blood cells of all lineages. The main blood cells (see the Blood Cell Lines section in the Lab Values & Drug Monitoring chapter) produced in the myeloid lineage include:

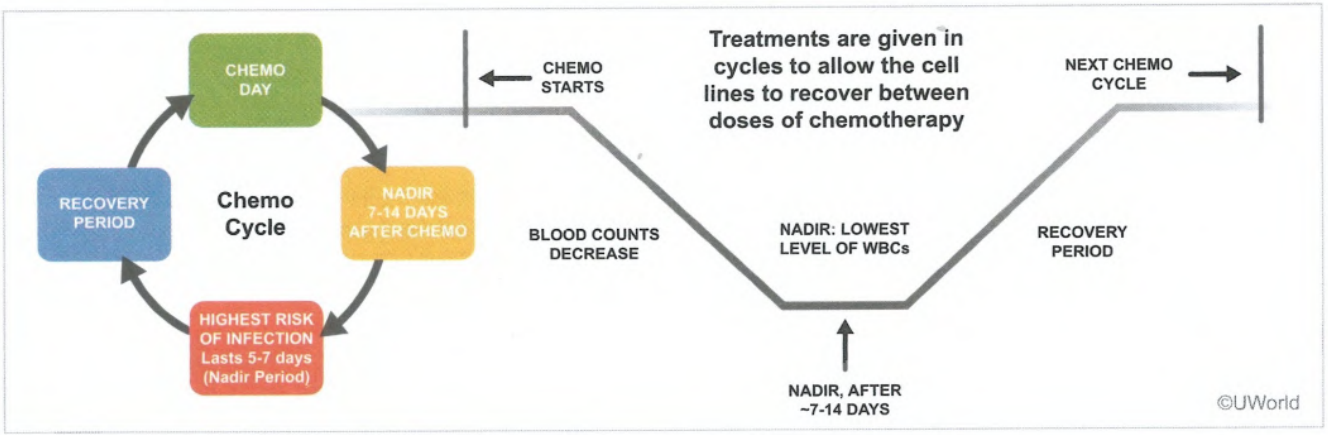
- White blood cells (WBCs) (or granulocytes)
- Platelets (or thrombocytes)
- Red blood cells (RBCs) (or erythrocytes)

Myelosuppression (i.e., bone marrow suppression) is a common complication of many chemotherapy regimens; it is characterized by a decrease in blood cell production, resulting in fewer WBCs (neutropenia), platelets (thrombocytopenia) and RBCs (anemia). Almost all chemotherapy drugs can cause myelosuppression, except bleomycin, pegaspargase and vincristine. Most monoclonal antibodies (mAbs) also do not cause myelosuppression.

MYELOSUPPRESSION RECOVERY

The lowest point that WBCs and platelets reach is called the nadir, which typically occurs about 7 – 14 days after chemotherapy. The RBC nadir occurs much later, generally after several months of treatment, due to the long life span (~120 days) of RBCs.

Patients are at the greatest risk of complications during the nadir period, after which, blood cell counts will start to recover. WBCs and platelets generally recover 3 – 4 weeks after treatment. However, in instances of prolonged myelosuppression, the next cycle of chemotherapy may need to be delayed, to allow more time for recovery, or doses may need to be reduced. The next cycle of chemotherapy is started after the WBCs and platelets have returned to a safe level. The image below summarizes the nadir and recovery of WBCs.



NEUTROPENIA

The major function of white blood cells, including neutrophils, is to prevent infection. Neutropenia (a type of leukopenia) is a low neutrophil count; it is assessed by calculating an absolute neutrophil count (ANC), the formula for which can be found in the Calculations IV chapter. The more significant the neutropenia (i.e., the lower the ANC), the higher the risk of infection.

NEUTROPENIA DEFINITIONS (AMERICAN SOCIETY OF CLINICAL ONCOLOGY)

CATEGORY	ABSOLUTE NEUTROPHIL COUNT (ANC)
Neutropenia	< 1,000 cells/mm^3
Severe neutropenia	< 500 cells/mm^3
Profound neutropenia	< 100 cells/mm^3

GRANULOCYTE COLONY-STIMULATING FACTORS

Granulocyte colony-stimulating factors (G-CSFs, or simply CSFs) stimulate WBC production in the bone marrow. They are given prophylactically after chemotherapy to reduce the duration and severity of neutropenia (and therefore the risk of infection) and to enable delivery of more intensive chemotherapy when indicated.

Patients with a high risk of developing febrile neutropenia (e.g., based on their chemotherapy regimen or comorbidities) should receive G-CSF prior to their first cycle of chemotherapy and should have their risk re-evaluated with each subsequent cycle.

DRUGS*	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Filgrastim *(Neupogen)* Biosimilars: *Nivestym, Nypozi, Releuko, Zarxio* tbo-filgrastim *(Granix)*	5 mcg/kg IV/SC daily until post-nadir recovery (round to the nearest 300 mcg or 480 mcg vial size)	**SIDE EFFECTS** Bone pain, rash, hypersensitivity/allergic reaction (including anaphylaxis), glomerulonephritis, splenic rupture, respiratory distress syndrome **MONITORING** CBC with differential, vital signs, upper abdominal pain **NOTES** Store in refrigerator; protect vials and syringes from light Administer first dose no sooner than 24 hours after chemotherapy (can be up to 96 hours after) *Neulasta Onpro* and *Udenyca Onbody:* on-body injector applied to abdomen or back of arm after chemotherapy (delivers dose of pegfilgrastim ~27 hours after application) Pegfilgrastim/eflapegrastim-xnst: do not administer within 14 days before the next chemotherapy cycle
Pegfilgrastim *(Neulasta, Neulasta Onpro)* Pegylated form of filgrastim (extended half-life) Biosimilars: *Fulphila, Fylnetra, Nyvepria, Stimufend, Udenyca, Udenyca Onbody, Ziextenzo*	6 mg SC once per chemotherapy cycle	
Eflapegrastim-xnst *(Rolvedon)*	13.2 mg SC once per chemotherapy cycle	

**Sargramostim is a granulocyte macrophage colony-stimulating factor primarily used following bone marrow transplantation.*

FEBRILE NEUTROPENIA

If neutropenia occurs, the ability to fight infections is limited, and the risk of death from sepsis increases. Infection can be difficult to diagnose; fever may be the only sign of infection in a neutropenic patient (i.e., the usual increase in WBC count will not be present).

Febrile Neutropenia Diagnostic Criteria

FEVER	NEUTROPENIA
Oral temperature ≥ 38.3°C (101°F) × 1 reading, or Oral temperature ≥ 38.0°C (100.4°F) sustained for > 1 hour	ANC < 500 cells/mm^3, or ANC < 1,000 cells/mm^3 and expected to ↓ to < 500 cells/mm^3 over the next 48 hours

Empiric antibiotics should be started immediately if a fever occurs in a neutropenic patient. Patients receiving cytotoxic chemotherapy have an increased risk for hospital-acquired infections (e.g., pneumonia) and bacteremia, from translocation of enteric bacteria into the bloodstream or use of a central venous access device (i.e., central line). Although gram-positive and gram-negative bacteria can both cause infection in patients with febrile neutropenia, gram-negative bacteria have the highest risk of causing sepsis and death.

The initial empiric antibiotic regimen must provide adequate activity against gram-negative bacteria, including *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*. Treatment modifications can be considered based on culture results or if the clinical situation does not improve (e.g., persistent fever). Antibiotics should be continued until the WBC count has recovered or for an appropriate treatment course if a source of infection is identified.

PATIENT RISK	RISK DEFINITION	INITIAL EMPIRIC ANTIBIOTICS
Low risk	Expected ANC ≤ 100 cells/mm^3 for < 7 days No comorbidities	**Oral antipseudomonal antibiotics** Ciprofloxacin or levofloxacin, PLUS Amoxicillin/clavulanate (for adequate gram-positive coverage) or clindamycin (if allergic to penicillin)
High risk	Expected ANC ≤ 100 cells/mm^3 for ≥ 7 days Presence of comorbidities Evidence of renal or hepatic impairment (CrCl < 30 mL/min or LFTs > 5× ULN)	**Intravenous antipseudomonal beta-lactams** Cefepime or Ceftazidime or Imipenem/cilastatin or Meropenem or Piperacillin/tazobactam

THROMBOCYTOPENIA

Low platelets can result in spontaneous, uncontrolled bleeding. The normal range for platelets is 150,000 – 450,000 cells/mm^3. The risk for spontaneous bleeding is increased when the platelet count is < 10,000 cells/mm^3, which is the threshold at which a platelet transfusion (the primary thrombocytopenia treatment) is indicated. In addition to chemotherapy dose reduction or delaying therapy until platelets recover, management of chemotherapy-induced thrombocytopenia includes avoiding intramuscular injections and medications that affect platelet functioning (e.g., NSAIDs).

ANEMIA

Anemia is a decrease in RBCs and hemoglobin (Hgb), the oxygen-carrying component of RBCs. Normal Hgb levels are 12 – 16 g/dL for females and 13.5 – 18 g/dL for males. Patients with anemia should have levels of folate, vitamin B12 and iron evaluated to assess for other possible causes of anemia.

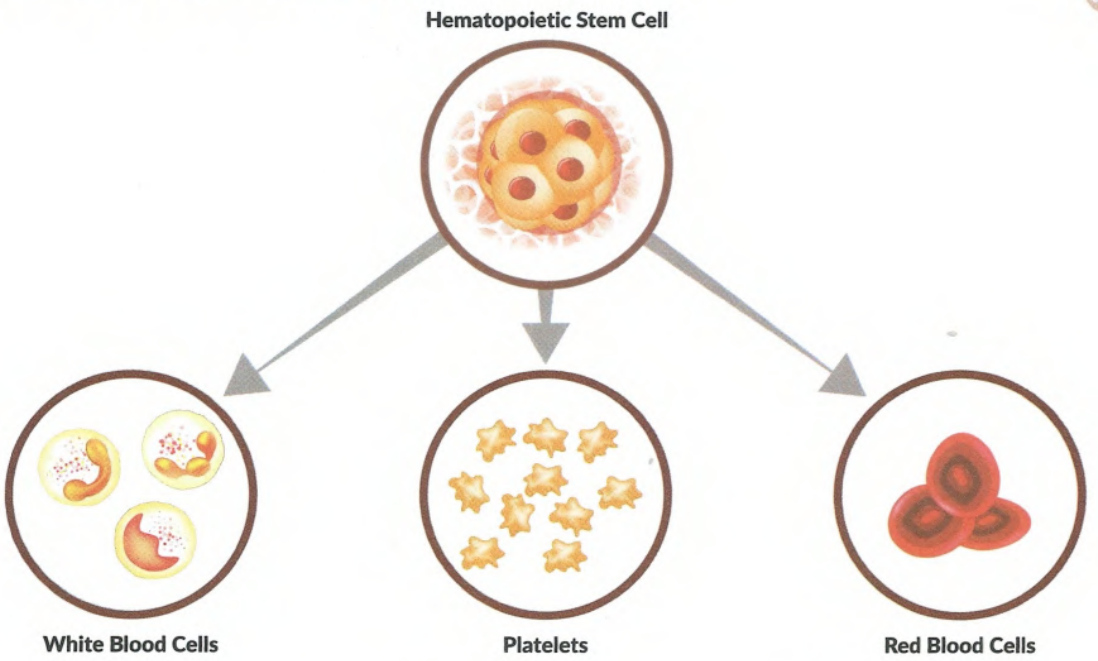
Anemia can resolve without treatment or, in patients with symptoms (e.g., fatigue, weakness), it can be treated with an RBC transfusion. An erythropoiesis-stimulating agent (ESA), including epoetin alfa *(Epogen, Procrit)* or the longer-acting darbepoetin alfa *(Aranesp)*, can be considered in select patients. ESAs can shorten survival and ↑ tumor progression (i.e., they can contribute to cancer growth). Therefore, they are for palliation only and are not recommended in patients receiving chemotherapy with curative intent.

To minimize the risks of ESAs, the following requirements must be met:

- Patient has a non-myeloid malignancy (e.g., carcinoma, sarcoma) and anemia is due to the effect of myelosuppressive chemotherapy.
- Hgb is < 10 g/dL and there is a minimum of two additional months of planned chemotherapy.
- The lowest dose needed to maintain a Hgb level sufficient to avoid RBC transfusions is used.
- The ESA is discontinued following completion of chemotherapy.

Serum ferritin, transferrin saturation (TSAT) and total iron-binding capacity (TIBC) must be assessed (and iron replacement therapy provided, if needed) since ESAs will not correct the anemia if iron levels are inadequate. For further information regarding ESAs, see the Anemia chapter.

MYELOSUPPRESSION SUMMARY



Neutropenia

- ↓ WBCs (↓ immune response)
- Symptoms: fever/infection

Prevention

- Granulocyte colony-stimulating factor (G-CSF) in high-risk patients

Treatment

- Antibiotics (if febrile)

Thrombocytopenia

- ↓ platelets
- Symptom: bleeding

Treatment

- Platelet transfusion (if platelets < 10,000 cells/mm^3)

Anemia

- ↓ RBCs, Hgb, Hct
- Symptoms: weakness/fatigue

Treatment

- Can resolve on its own
- RBC transfusion in symptomatic patients
- Erythropoiesis-stimulating agent (ESA) in select patients

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CHEMOTHERAPY-INDUCED NAUSEA AND VOMITING

Chemotherapy-induced nausea and vomiting (CINV) is one of the most common adverse effects associated with cancer treatment. If poorly managed, it can lead to patient discomfort, reduced quality of life, medical complications (e.g., esophageal tears, dehydration) and potential treatment nonadherence.

CINV occurs most commonly with cisplatin, carboplatin, cyclophosphamide and anthracyclines. Patient factors that increase the risk of CINV include female sex, younger age, pretreatment anxiety, a history of motion sickness or morning sickness during pregnancy, and a history of nausea and vomiting with previous chemotherapy cycles.

CINV can be classified as:

- Acute: occurs within 24 hours after chemotherapy and peaks around 5 – 6 hours.
- Delayed: occurs > 24 hours after chemotherapy.
- Anticipatory: occurs before treatment; develops as a conditioned response from a past negative experience.
- Breakthrough: occurs at any time after chemotherapy, despite prophylaxis, and requires rescue antiemetics.
- Refractory: occurs when prophylaxis and/or rescue treatment is not effective.

TYPES OF ANTIEMETICS FOR CINV

The major neurotransmitters responsible for CINV include serotonin, substance P, neurokinin, dopamine and gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA). The table below represents the most common drug classes used for CINV.

NEUROKININ-1 RECEPTOR ANTAGONISTS (NK1 RAs)	SEROTONIN RECEPTOR ANTAGONISTS (5-HT3 RAs)	DOPAMINE RECEPTOR ANTAGONISTS	OTHER
Aprepitant Fosaprepitant Rolapitant	Dolasetron Granisetron Ondansetron Palonosetron*	Olanzapine Haloperidol Metoclopramide Prochlorperazine Promethazine	Dexamethasone Dronabinol Lorazepam

**Combination products available: netupitant/palonosetron, fosnetupitant/palonosetron.*

ANTIEMETIC REGIMENS FOR ACUTE/DELAYED NAUSEA & VOMITING

The primary goal of antiemetic therapy is to prevent nausea and vomiting (emesis). Therefore, antiemetic regimens (i.e., one dose of each drug in the regimen) are given at least 30 minutes before chemotherapy; if the patient is receiving a multi-day chemotherapy regimen, antiemetics are continued for the full period of emetic risk (i.e., select drugs are repeated each day chemotherapy is administered).

Chemotherapy regimens are divided into risk groups based on emetogenic potential, and the antiemetic regimen recommended is based on this risk (see table below). Lorazepam can be added to the antiemetic regimen if needed for anticipatory nausea and/or vomiting; it is started the night before treatment and repeated the day of treatment.

INTRAVENOUS CHEMOTHERAPY RISK	ANTIEMETIC REGIMEN (DAY 1)*
High emetic risk: 90% frequency of acute emesis (e.g., cisplatin, any regimen containing both an anthracycline and cyclophosphamide)	**3 or 4 drugs** ■ Preferred: NK1 RA + 5-HT3 RA + olanzapine + dexamethasone ■ NK1 RA + 5-HT3 RA + dexamethasone ■ Palonosetron + olanzapine + dexamethasone
Moderate emetic risk: 30-90% frequency of acute emesis	**2 or 3 drugs** ■ NK1 RA + 5-HT3 RA + dexamethasone ■ 5-HT3 RA + dexamethasone ■ Palonosetron + olanzapine + dexamethasone
Low emetic risk: 10-30% frequency of acute emesis	**1 drug** ■ 5-HT3 RA (dolasetron, granisetron or ondansetron) ■ Dexamethasone ■ Metoclopramide ■ Prochlorperazine
Minimal emetic risk: < 10% frequency of acute emesis (the majority of mAbs)	**No routine prophylaxis**

**Can add H2RA or PPI for reflux symptoms.*

BREAKTHROUGH CINV

Despite receiving antiemetic prophylaxis for acute and/or delayed CINV, some patients may experience breakthrough nausea and vomiting. Treatment for breakthrough CINV is based on an assessment of the current prophylaxis regimen and typically involves adding one or more drugs (often every 4 – 6 hours PRN) with a different mechanism of action.

Patient-specific factors also need to be considered, such as the route of administration (e.g., ability to tolerate PO, active vomiting) and individual risk factors (e.g., age). Various medications may be beneficial, including 5-HT3 RAs (except palonosetron), dopamine receptor antagonists (e.g., prochlorperazine, promethazine, metoclopramide, haloperidol, olanzapine), cannabinoids, dexamethasone, lorazepam and scopolamine.

ANTIEMETICS USED FOR CINV

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Substance P/Neurokinin-1 Receptor Antagonists (NK1 RAs): inhibit the substance P/neurokinin-1 receptor, thereby augmenting the antiemetic activity of 5-HT3 receptor antagonists and corticosteroids.		
Aprepitant *(Emend,* *Emend Tri-Pack, Cinvanti)*	PO: 80-125 mg IV *(Cinvanti):* 130 mg	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Rolapitant: do not use with thioridazine or pimozide (CYP2D6 substrates) **SIDE EFFECTS** Abdominal pain, dizziness, dyspepsia, infusion-site reactions **NOTES** Aprepitant, fosaprepitant, netupitant: inhibit the metabolism of dexamethasone (↑ dexamethasone levels) Fosaprepitant IV: converted to aprepitant within 30 minutes after the end of the infusion
Fosaprepitant *(Emend,* *Focinvez)*	IV: 150 mg	
Netupitant/Palonosetron *(Akynzeo)*	PO: 300/0.5 mg	
Fosnetupitant/ Palonosetron *(Akynzeo)*	IV: 235/0.25 mg	
Rolapitant *(Varubi)*	PO: 180 mg	
5-HT3 Receptor Antagonists: block serotonin, both peripherally on vagal nerve terminals and centrally in the chemoreceptor trigger zone.		
Ondansetron *(Zofran*)*	PO: 8-24 mg IV: 8-16 mg	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Do not use with apomorphine due to severe hypotension **WARNINGS** Dose-dependent QT prolongation (torsades de pointes) – more common with IV administration; limit IV dose of ondansetron to 16 mg; the lowest risk is with palonosetron Serotonin syndrome when used in combination with other serotonergic agents (see Drug Interactions chapter) Hypersensitivity reactions **SIDE EFFECTS** Headache, constipation, fatigue, injection site reactions **NOTES** *Sancuso:* apply 24-48 hours before chemotherapy
Granisetron *(Sancuso,* *Sustol)*	PO: 2 mg IV: 10 mcg/kg SC *(Sustol):* 10 mg Patch *(Sancuso):* 3.1 mg/24 hour	
Palonosetron *(Posfrea)* + netupitant *(Akynzeo)* + fosnetupitant *(Akynzeo)*	IV: 0.25 mg PO: 0.5/300 mg IV: 0.25/235 mg	
Dolasetron	PO: 100 mg	
Corticosteroid: mechanism of action as an antiemetic unknown.		
Dexamethasone	PO/IV: 8-12 mg	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Systemic fungal infections **SIDE EFFECTS** Short-term effects include fluid retention, ↑ appetite/weight gain, emotional instability (euphoria, mood swings, irritability, acute psychosis), insomnia, GI upset/dyspepsia Higher doses ↑ BP and blood glucose

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Benzodiazepine: enhances GABA (an inhibitory neurotransmitter), which decreases neuronal excitability and results in the alleviation of anxiety and suppression of anticipatory nausea and vomiting.		
Lorazepam *(Ativan)* C-IV	PO/SL/IV: 0.5-1 mg Start evening prior to chemotherapy if used for anticipatory N/V	See the Anxiety Disorders chapter for details
Dopamine Receptor Antagonists: block dopamine receptors in the CNS, including in the chemoreceptor trigger zone.		
Olanzapine *(Zyprexa, Zyprexa Zydis)*	PO: 5-10 mg	**BOXED WARNINGS** Olanzapine, prochlorperazine, haloperidol: ↑ mortality in elderly patients with dementia-related psychosis Promethazine: do not use in children < 2 years of age (risk of respiratory depression); can cause serious tissue injury due to extravasation if administered intra-arterially, SC or IV Metoclopramide: tardive dyskinesia (TD) that can be irreversible; discontinue if signs or symptoms of TD occur; risk ↑ with renal impairment, longer duration of treatment and total cumulative dose (avoid treatment > 12 weeks) **WARNINGS** Avoid use in patients with Parkinson disease (can exacerbate symptoms) **SIDE EFFECTS** Sedation, lethargy, acute EPS (antidote is diphenhydramine or benztropine), ↓ seizure threshold, hypotension, neuroleptic malignant syndrome (NMS), QT prolongation Strong anticholinergic side effects (e.g., constipation) except with metoclopramide (prokinetic effect causes diarrhea) **NOTES** Haloperidol and olanzapine: see the Schizophrenia chapter for details
Prochlorperazine *(Compro)*	PO/IV: 10 mg PR: 25 mg	
Promethazine *(Phenergan, Promethegan)*	PO: 12.5-25 mg PR: 25 mg Can cause severe tissue injury if administered parenterally	
Metoclopramide *(Reglan)*	PO/IV: 10-20 mg CrCl < 60 mL/min: decrease dose 50% (to avoid side effects)	
Haloperidol *(Haldol*, Haldol Decanoate)*	PO/IV: 0.5-2 mg	
Cannabinoid: activates cannabinoid receptors within the CNS and/or inhibits the vomiting control mechanism in the medulla oblongata.		
Dronabinol ***Marinol*** capsules: C-III *Syndros* solution: C-II Refrigerate	Capsules: 5-10 mg Solution: 2.1-4.2 mg/m^2	**WARNINGS** Use caution in patients with a history of substance use disorder or psychiatric conditions **SIDE EFFECTS** Somnolence, euphoria, ↑ appetite, seizure **NOTES** Dronabinol oral solution contains 50% alcohol
Anticholinergic Agent: inhibits the actions of acetylcholine at central and peripheral muscarinic receptors.		
Scopolamine *(Transderm Scop)*	Transdermal patch: 1.5 mg/72 hours	See the Motion Sickness chapter for details

**Brand discontinued but name still used in practice.*

PREGNANCY AND BREASTFEEDING

Most chemotherapy is highly teratogenic; all patients must avoid becoming pregnant during treatment. Contraception should include barrier methods to prevent a partner from having contact with body fluids. Pregnant females should not handle chemotherapy drugs. All patients should be informed when a medication can cause long-term sterility.

CHEMOTHERAPY HANDLING

All chemotherapy drugs are hazardous, which means they are carcinogenic, genotoxic or teratogenic and can cause harm to those exposed to the drug. Healthcare staff (e.g., pharmacists, technicians, nurses) must use protective measures to limit exposure. The Compounding with Hazardous Drugs chapter provides detailed information on USP 800 requirements for handling hazardous drugs, the compounding environment and necessary equipment.

CHEMOTHERAPY ADMINISTRATION AND EXTRAVASATION

Many intravenous chemotherapy agents are vesicants that can cause tissue necrosis if the drug accidentally leaks from the vein into the surrounding tissue (also called extravasation).

Vesicants can be further categorized according to their potential for causing damage. DNA-binding vesicants (e.g., anthracyclines, mitomycin) can cause more tissue injury than non-DNA binding vesicants (e.g., vinca alkaloids), which are more easily metabolized.

Care should be taken to avoid extravasation by administering these drugs through central venous catheters or freshly started peripheral IV lines with confirmed patency. The infusion site and symptoms (e.g., redness, burning) should be monitored closely. Extravasation should be treated as follows:

- Anthracyclines: apply cold compresses and administer dexrazoxane or topical dimethyl sulfoxide (DMSO)
- Vinca alkaloids: apply warm compresses and administer hyaluronidase

Although most chemotherapy is given intravenously, a limited number of agents can be administered intrathecally (i.e., into the cerebrospinal fluid); these products must be preservative-free. Accidental intrathecal administration of vinca alkaloids, including vincristine, is fatal (see Vinca Alkaloids section earlier in the chapter).

TIMING OF VACCINATIONS

All vaccinations (both inactivated and live-attenuated products) should be avoided during chemotherapy because the antibody response is suboptimal. Vaccine administration should precede chemotherapy by ≥ 2 weeks.

Patients receiving chemotherapy may receive the inactivated seasonal influenza vaccine between chemotherapy cycles. Live vaccines should be avoided in immunocompromised patients; they can be administered ≥ 4 weeks prior or at least three months after discontinuation of chemotherapy.

TARGETED THERAPIES

Targeted therapies recognize specific biomarkers or molecular targets (e.g., gene mutations) present on cancer cells that are involved in tumor growth and progression. They work in a variety of ways, including:

- Helping the immune system destroy cancer cells (e.g., immunotherapy).
- Interrupting signals that cause cancer cells to grow.
- Inhibiting angiogenesis (i.e., blood supply to the tumor).
- Inducing apoptosis.
- Starving cancer cells of hormones needed to grow (e.g., hormone or endocrine therapy).

Most targeted therapies are monoclonal antibodies or small molecule drugs (e.g., tyrosine kinase inhibitors). Pharmacogenomic testing must be performed to identify patients likely to respond to these targeted therapies, except with vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF) inhibitors.

MONOCLONAL ANTIBODIES

Monoclonal antibodies (mAbs) are used for cancer treatment and many other conditions. They are large proteins that bind to specific antigens or receptors on the cell surface and cause cell death. Some mAbs are conjugated to cytotoxic drugs or radioactive compounds, which helps enable the delivery and release of these compounds directly into the cancer cell while reducing damage to normal cells. Other mAbs (i.e., immunotherapy) help activate the immune system so that it recognizes and destroys tumor cells.

Because mAbs are biologic products identified by the immune system as a foreign substance, they are associated with infusion-related reactions, which typically occur within the first few hours after administration and are characterized by fever, flushing, dyspnea, rash and sometimes anaphylaxis. Most mAbs require the following premedications:

- Acetaminophen (usually 650 mg PO).
- Diphenhydramine (IV or PO) or other antihistamine.

Additional medications that may be needed based on the severity of the reaction include H2RAs, steroids and/or meperidine (for rigors).

Representative monoclonal antibody targets and associated drugs are included in the following table (not a complete list).

NAME TIP...

- "tu" = tumors (e.g., rituximab, cetuximab)
- "ci" = circulatory system (e.g., bevacizumab)
- "li" = immune system (e.g., ipilimumab, pembrolizumab)

DRUGS	KEY SAFETY CONCERNS
Anti-Cluster of Differentiation (CD) Agents: bind to specific antigens expressed on the cell surface, causing cell death.	
Rituximab *(Rituxan)* Target: CD20 Biosimilars: *Riabni, Ruxience, Truxima* Others: Blinatumomab *(Blincyto)*: targets CD19 Brentuximab vedotin *(Adcetris)*: targets CD30 Daratumumab *(Darzalex)*: targets CD38	■ Rituximab: hepatitis B reactivation □ Check hepatitis B panel (e.g., hepatitis B surface antigen, hepatitis B core antibody) prior to treatment initiation □ Consider antiviral (e.g., entecavir) prophylaxis in select patients
Epidermal Growth Factor Receptor (EGFR) Inhibitors: inhibit pathways involved in cellular proliferation, differentiation and survival.	
Cetuximab *(Erbitux)* Target: EGFR gene expression Other pharmacogenetic considerations: KRAS mutation: predicts lack of response to anti-EGFR drugs (can use if KRAS wild type) BRAF V600E mutation: must use only in combination with BRAF inhibitor	■ Dermatologic toxicity (e.g., acneiform rash) occurs within the 1st two weeks of treatment and correlates with response to therapy (i.e., rash indicates the drug is working) □ Advise patients to adopt general skin care measures (e.g., avoid sunlight, use sunscreen, apply moisturizers) □ Consider prophylactic measures to reduce the risk of skin damage (e.g., topical steroids, antibiotics)
Human Epidermal Growth Factor Receptor 2 (HER2) Inhibitors: bind to extracellular ligand domain of HER2 protein to stop signaling pathways and cell proliferation.	
Trastuzumab *(Herceptin)* Target: HER2 overexpression (see Breast Cancer section) Biosimilars: *Kanjinti, Hercessi, Herzuma, Ogivri, Ontruzant, Trazimera* Others: Ado-trastuzumab emtansine *(Kadcyla)* Fam-trastuzumab deruxtecan *(Enhertu)* Pertuzumab *(Perjeta)*	■ Cardiotoxicity (e.g., cardiomyopathy) □ Monitor LVEF (using echocardiogram or MUGA scan) at baseline and during treatment and s/sx of heart failure (e.g., edema, shortness of breath) ■ Conventional trastuzumab, ado-trastuzumab emtansine and fam-trastuzumab deruxtecan are not interchangeable
Vascular Endothelial Growth Factor (VEGF) Inhibitors: inhibit growth of blood vessels needed for tumor proliferation.	
Bevacizumab *(Avastin)* Target: none Biosimilars: *Alymsys, Mvasi, Vegzelma, Zirabev*	■ Impaired wound healing (due to decreased blood flow) □ Do not administer for 28 days before or after surgery ■ Thromboembolic events (e.g., venous thromboembolism) ■ Hemorrhage/fatal bleeding ■ GI perforation
Programmed Death Receptor-1 (PD-1) Inhibitors: bind to the PD-1 receptor on T-cells to block PD-1 ligands from binding, thereby increasing T-cell activation and antitumor response; a type of immunotherapy.	
Pembrolizumab *(Keytruda)* Nivolumab *(Opdivo)*	■ Immune-mediated toxicities (e.g., endocrinopathies, colitis, hepatotoxicity, pneumonitis, thyroid disorders) □ Treatment typically requires administration of a systemic steroid and/or management of the specific toxicity
Cytotoxic T-Lymphocyte Antigen-4 (CTLA-4) Inhibitor: binds to CTLA-4 receptor, which removes the "brake" from T-cell activation, increasing T-cell responsiveness and antitumor response; a type of immunotherapy.	
Ipilimumab *(Yervoy)*	■ Immune-mediated toxicities (see above)

TYROSINE KINASE INHIBITORS

A large number of tyrosine kinase proteins play a role in the intracellular signaling pathways that control the growth and differentiation of cells. Tyrosine kinase inhibitors (TKIs) are orally administered small molecules that alter signal transduction and cell growth.

The table below is not all-inclusive, but contains representative TKIs, the genetic target/mutation that the patient should test positive for in order to use the TKI, and their key safety concerns.

DRUGS	KEY SAFETY CONCERNS
BCR-ABL Inhibitors: block tyrosine kinase signaling protein produced by the BCR-ABL fusion gene (Philadelphia chromosome) that causes uncontrolled cell division.	
Imatinib *(Gleevec, Imkeldi)* Dasatinib *(Sprycel)* Nilotinib *(Danziten, Tasigna)* Target: BCR-ABL fusion gene	■ Fluid retention (e.g., edema, pleural effusion, ascites) ■ QT prolongation (greatest risk with nilotinib) □ Assess QT interval with an electrocardiogram prior to initiation □ Correct preexisting electrolyte abnormalities □ Avoid concurrent QT-prolonging drugs and strong CYP3A4 inhibitors ■ GI upset (e.g., abdominal pain) □ Imatinib: must be taken with food or within 1 hr after a meal
BRAF Inhibitors: inhibit certain mutated forms of protein kinase BRAF, blocking tumor cell growth.	
Dabrafenib *(Tafinlar)* Vemurafenib *(Zelboraf)* Target: BRAF V600E or V600K mutation	■ New malignancies (e.g., basal cell carcinoma) ■ QT prolongation ■ Febrile reactions, hyperglycemia, skin rash
Mitogen-Activated Extracellular Kinase (MEK) 1 and 2 Inhibitors: inhibit MEK, a cell signaling protein downstream from RAF.	
Cobimetinib *(Cotellic)* Trametinib *(Mekinist)* Target: BRAF V600E or V600K mutation (when used in combination with a BRAF inhibitor, which is typical)	■ Retinopathy ■ Rhabdomyolysis
Epidermal Growth Factor Receptor (EGFR) Inhibitors: inhibit pathways involved in cellular proliferation, differentiation and survival.	
Afatinib *(Gilotrif)* Erlotinib *(Tarceva)* Target: EGFR gene mutation (exon 19 deletion or exon 21 substitution)	■ Dermatologic toxicity (e.g., acneiform rash) occurs within the 1st two weeks of treatment and correlates with response to therapy (i.e., rash indicates the drug is working) □ Advise patients to adopt general skin care measures (e.g., avoid sunlight, use sunscreen, apply moisturizers) □ Consider prophylactic measures to reduce the risk of skin damage (e.g., topical steroids, antibiotics)

TREATMENT OF SELECT CANCERS

Cancer remains a leading cause of death in the U.S., but mortality rates have declined due to improved screening, early detection and improved treatments. This section of the chapter discusses the risk factors, prevention and treatment of breast and prostate cancer, both of which have treatment modalities (e.g., hormone therapies) that are administered orally and commonly encountered in the community pharmacy setting.

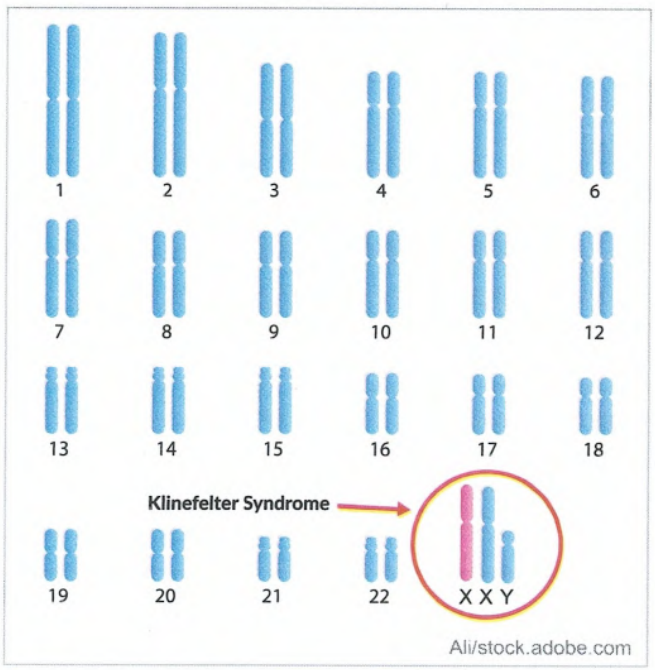
BREAST CANCER

After skin cancer, breast cancer is the most common cancer in women, accounting for ~30% of all new female cancers annually.

BREAST CANCER RISK

The primary risk factor for developing breast cancer is being female. Females produce more estrogen and progesterone than males, which enables certain breast cells to grow. Female breast cells are also more likely to mutate because they are more active than male breast cells (which are largely inactive). Increasing age, a family history of breast cancer and genetics (e.g., BRCA gene mutation) are other nonmodifiable risk factors for developing breast cancer.

Less than 1% of breast cancer occurs in males. The risk increases in men with a BRCA gene mutation and the presence of any condition that increases estrogen production, such as Klinefelter syndrome. Klinefelter syndrome is a congenital condition in which males have one Y chromosome and two or more X chromosomes (instead of one X and one Y chromosome), resulting in more estrogen production than is typical and lower levels of androgens (i.e., male sex hormones).



BRCA1 AND BRCA2 GENE MUTATIONS

The BRCA1 and BRCA2 genes contain instructions for the production of proteins that repair damaged DNA. They normally suppress tumor growth; however, inherited mutations in either gene prevent cell repair and cause a dramatic increase in breast cancer incidence. BRCA mutations are also associated with an increased risk for ovarian and prostate cancer.

In a female without either mutation, the lifetime risk of developing breast cancer is ~12%; with either BRCA mutation, the risk can increase up to ~70%.

BREAST CANCER PREVENTION

Patients with an elevated risk of breast cancer may be candidates for prophylactic surgery (e.g., mastectomy) or a risk-reducing medication [e.g., selective estrogen receptor modulator (SERM), aromatase inhibitor (AI)]. Tamoxifen is a SERM that can be used in pre- or postmenopausal females. Raloxifene (another SERM) and the AIs, exemestane and anastrozole, are indicated in postmenopausal females only.

While tamoxifen and the AIs can be used for breast cancer prevention and treatment, raloxifene is for prevention only; raloxifene can be used for dual purposes since it increases bone density and is also indicated for the prevention and treatment of osteoporosis (which has a higher incidence post-menopause). See the Osteoporosis, Menopause & Testosterone Use chapter for details on raloxifene.

IDENTIFYING BREAST CANCER

BREAST SELF-EXAMS

Breast self-exams are not used for screening, but can help identify a change in the look or feel of the breast or nipple, or nipple discharge, which would warrant follow-up screening.

BREAST IMAGING STUDIES

A mammogram uses low-dose X-rays to identify abnormal breast tissue. A few images are taken in a screening mammogram, and if they look suspicious, a diagnostic mammogram is performed. An ultrasound is useful to differentiate between a benign fluid-filled cyst and a solid mass that can be a cancerous tumor; it can also be used to guide a needle during a biopsy. A screening breast MRI in addition to an annual mammogram is recommended in high-risk females.

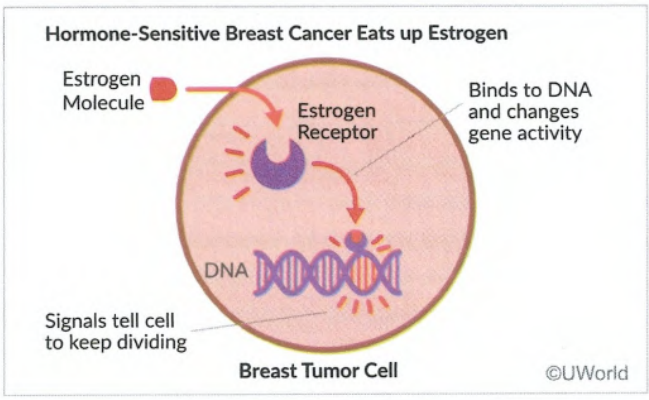
Following an abnormal imaging test (e.g., mammogram, MRI), a biopsy is performed to identify if cancer cells are present.

BREAST CANCER TREATMENT

Depending on the breast cancer type and stage, treatment can include some combination of local (e.g., surgery, radiation) and/or systemic (e.g., chemotherapy, hormone therapy) modalities. If the cancer expresses certain markers (e.g., HER2), the patient can benefit from targeted therapy.

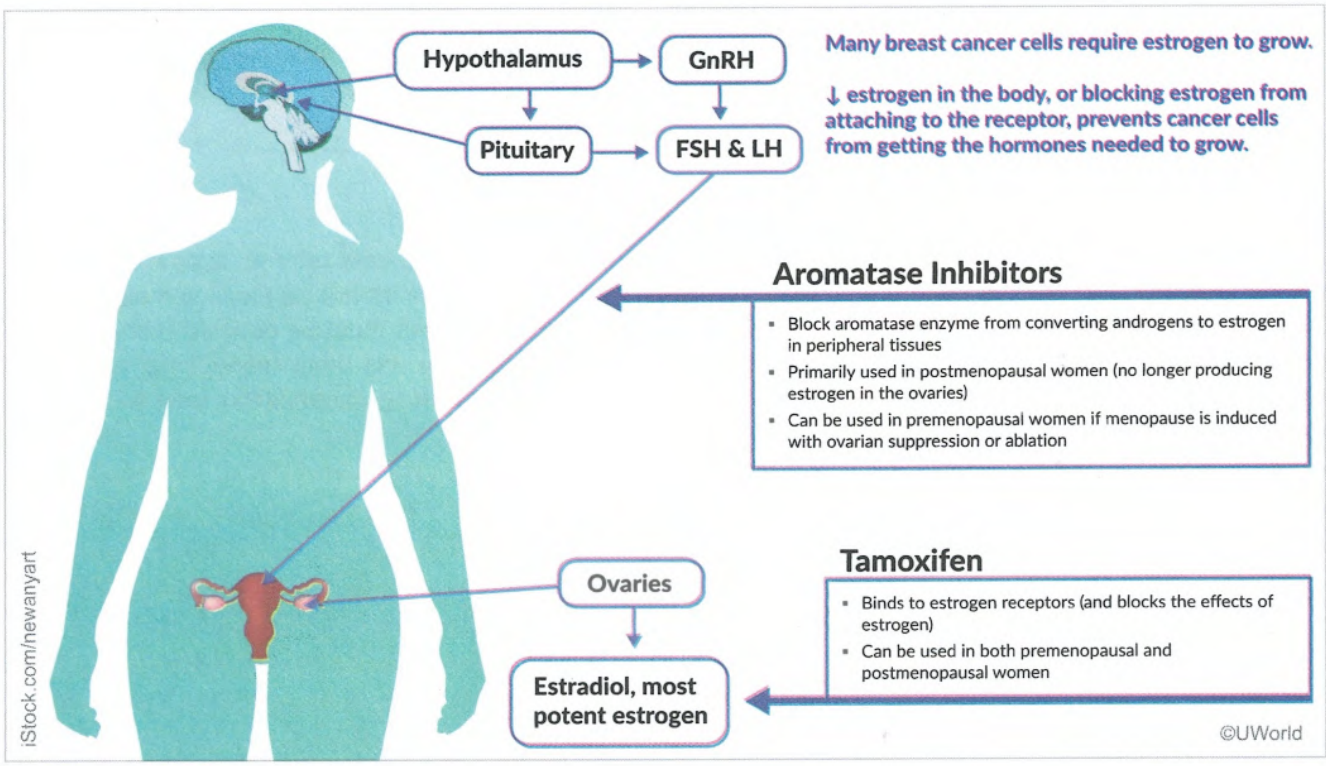
HORMONE RECEPTOR-POSITIVE TREATMENT (ENDOCRINE THERAPY)

About 75% of breast cancers have cells with receptors that attach estrogen and/or progesterone, which stimulate cell growth. Tumors that express these receptors are called hormone-sensitive or hormone receptor-positive (HR+). This is further classified as estrogen receptor-positive (ER+), progesterone receptor-positive (PR+) or both (ER+/PR+).



Patients with hormone-sensitive cancers are often prescribed adjuvant hormone (endocrine) therapy at diagnosis (to lower estrogen levels or stop estrogen from acting on breast cancer cells) and are treated for 5 – 10 years (to suppress cancer recurrence). The choice of treatment depends on the menopausal status of the patient.

- Premenopausal females produce estradiol (the most potent estrogen) in the ovaries. The first-line adjuvant treatment is tamoxifen, which prevents estrogen from binding to receptors.
  - Aromatase inhibitors (AIs) block aromatase, an enzyme that catalyzes the peripheral conversion of androgens to estrogen. Because AIs do not block ovarian estrogen production, they are not useful as monotherapy in premenopausal females unless menopause is induced (i.e., ovarian suppression or ablation). This can be accomplished via surgery, radiation or a gonadotropin-releasing hormone (GnRH) agonist (goserelin or leuprolide), which decreases ovarian estradiol production via suppression of follicle stimulating hormone (FSH) and luteinizing hormone (LH).
- Postmenopausal females produce very little estradiol in the ovaries and instead obtain most of their estrogen from the peripheral conversion of androgens to estrogen. Postmenopausal females can be treated with tamoxifen or an AI.

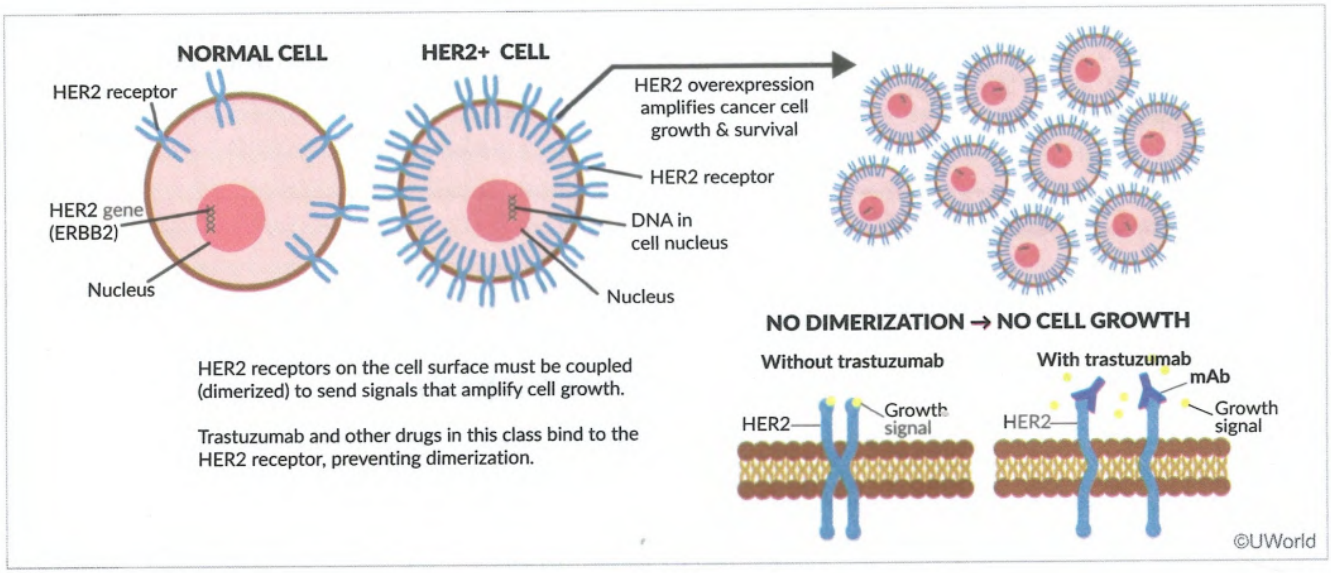


Hormone Receptor-Positive Treatment for Breast Cancer (Endocrine Therapy)

DRUGS	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/UNIQUE CONCERNS
Selective Estrogen Receptor Modulators (SERMs): compete with estrogen at receptor binding sites in breast and other tissue.	
Tamoxifen *(Soltamox)* Toremifene Oral Tamoxifen is a prodrug (converted via CYP2D6 to the potent metabolite endoxifen)	**BOXED WARNINGS** Tamoxifen: ↑ risk of uterine or endometrial cancer and thromboembolic events Toremifene: QT prolongation **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Tamoxifen: do not use with warfarin or a history of DVT/PE Toremifene: QT prolongation, uncorrected hypokalemia/hypomagnesemia **SIDE EFFECTS** Hot flashes/night sweats, vaginal bleeding/discharge, arthralgia/myalgia, edema, hypertension Tamoxifen: ↓ bone density in premenopausal females (supplement with calcium/vitamin D), cataracts **NOTES** Tamoxifen is teratogenic; contraception should be used in premenopausal females Tamoxifen efficacy is ↓ in slow CYP2D6 metabolizers or those taking CYP2D6 inhibitors Estrogen, and fluoxetine or paroxetine (CYP2D6 inhibitors), should not be used to treat hot flashes caused by tamoxifen; venlafaxine is preferred
Selective Estrogen Receptor Degrader (SERD): estrogen receptor antagonist that causes receptor downregulation.	
Fulvestrant *(Faslodex)* IM injection	**SIDE EFFECTS** ↑ LFTs, injection site pain, hot flashes, arthralgia/myalgia, nausea, headache, cough, dyspnea
Aromatase Inhibitors: block peripheral conversion of androgens to estrogen.	
Anastrozole ***(Arimidex)*** Letrozole *(Femara)* Exemestane *(Aromasin)* Oral	**SIDE EFFECTS** Hot flashes/night sweats, arthralgia/myalgia, lethargy/fatigue, N/V, rash, hepatotoxicity, hypertension, dyslipidemia Higher risk of osteoporosis due to ↓ bone mineral density (consider calcium and vitamin D supplementation, weight-bearing exercise, DEXA screening) Higher risk of CVD compared to SERMs

HER2-POSITIVE BREAST CANCER TREATMENT

Approximately 20% of breast tumors overexpress HER2/neu (an oncogene typically referred to as HER2) on the cell surface, which promotes rapid breast tumor growth. Although these tumors are aggressive malignancies, they respond well to drugs that target the HER2 protein. The HER2 proteins must be coupled (dimerized) to send signals that accelerate cell division and tumor growth. Trastuzumab and other monoclonal antibodies (e.g., pertuzumab) in the same class bind to the HER2 receptor, preventing dimerization (see Monoclonal Antibodies section earlier in the chapter).



TRIPLE-NEGATIVE BREAST CANCER

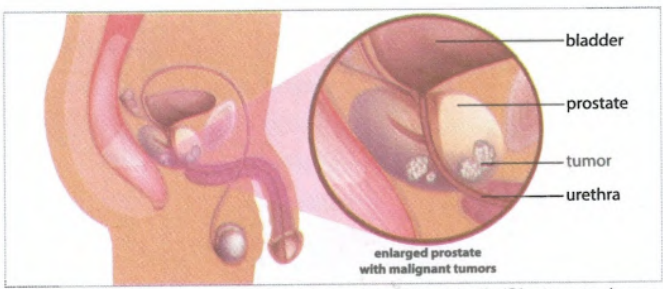
Triple-negative breast cancers (i.e., ER-, PR- and HER2-negative) replicate and spread faster than most other types of breast cancer. Hormone therapy and HER2-directed therapy are not beneficial and outcomes (e.g., survival rates) are generally worse. Taxane or anthracycline-based chemotherapy regimens are preferred.

METASTATIC BREAST CANCER

Breast cancer metastases are often located in the bone, lungs, liver and brain. In many patients, cure is unlikely and the goal of therapy is palliation (e.g., pain relief), prolongation of survival and maximizing quality of life. Chemotherapy (to shrink the tumor) and/or local palliation modalities (e.g., radiation, surgery) are common treatment options. Additional therapies include endocrine therapy (e.g., toremifene, fulvestrant) for HR+ cancers, and/or HER2-directed therapy for cancers with HER2 overexpression. Biomarker testing (e.g., PIK3CA, PD-L1) is recommended to identify patients eligible for targeted therapy.

PROSTATE CANCER

Prostate cancer is one of the most common cancers in males, affecting about 1 in 8 men. Fortunately, most prostate cancers are identified before the cancer has metastasized.



BlueRingMedia/Shutterstock.com

IDENTIFYING PROSTATE CANCER

DIGITAL RECTAL EXAM

Most prostate cancers develop near the side of the prostate and can be felt with a digital rectal exam (DRE), where a healthcare provider inserts a gloved, lubricated finger into the rectum to palpate the prostate. If abnormal lumps or masses are felt, tissue from the prostate will be excised and sent to pathology to assess if cancerous cells are present.

PROSTATE-SPECIFIC ANTIGEN

Prostate-specific antigen (PSA), produced in the prostate gland by normal and cancerous cells, increases with most prostate cancers. PSA is measured with a blood test (though screening is controversial, and false positives are common). Normal levels range from 0 – 4 ng/mL.

A level above 4 ng/mL may indicate prostate cancer and requires further evaluation (i.e., with a biopsy); a PSA > 10 ng/mL likely indicates prostate cancer. Several factors can impact PSA levels, including benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH), which increases PSA levels, and 5 alpha-reductase inhibitors (e.g., finasteride, dutasteride), which decrease PSA levels.

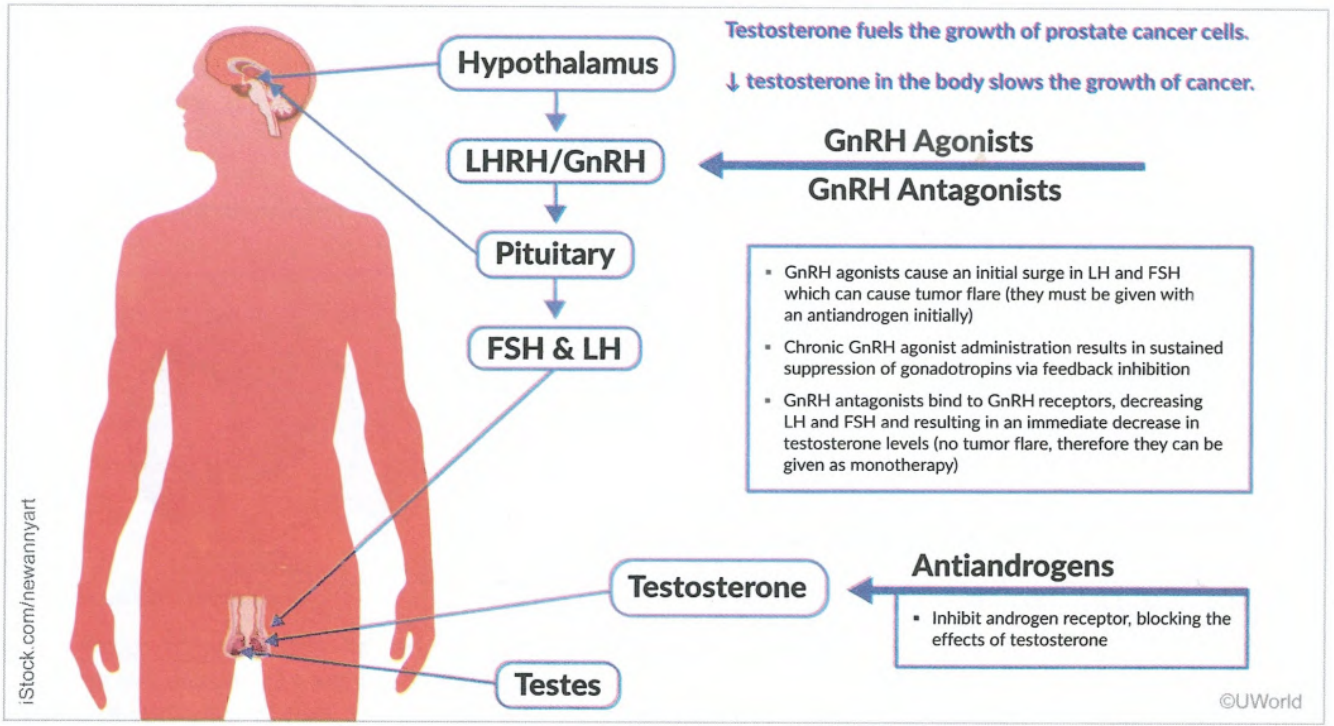
PROSTATE CANCER TREATMENT

For patients with localized disease and a low recurrence risk, observation or active surveillance is preferred; surgery, radiation or hormone therapy can be considered in those with intermediate or high recurrence risk.

HORMONE THERAPY (ANDROGEN DEPRIVATION THERAPY)

Hormone therapy for prostate cancer blocks androgens (testosterone and the active metabolite dihydrotestosterone) and is referred to as androgen deprivation therapy (ADT), or sometimes chemical castration. The goal of ADT is to induce castrate levels of testosterone, which can be achieved with a GnRH antagonist (alone) or a GnRH agonist (initially taken with an antiandrogen).

Normally, the hypothalamus releases luteinizing hormone-releasing hormone (LHRH), which stimulates the GnRH receptor in the pituitary to release FSH and LH. FSH and LH stimulate testosterone production in the testes. Testosterone levels are controlled via feedback inhibition, whereby FSH and LH output are suppressed and testosterone production subsequently decreases. GnRH agonists initially cause the pituitary to release FSH and LH, increasing testosterone and causing a tumor flare. Because of this, GnRH agonists must be given with an antiandrogen to block the effects of the initial testosterone surge on the cancer cells. GnRH antagonists can be given alone (without an antiandrogen) because they decrease testosterone right away and do not cause a tumor flare.



METASTATIC PROSTATE CANCER

Metastatic prostate cancer that has failed to respond to ADT is called "castration-resistant" and may be treated with a second-generation antiandrogen or chemotherapy.

Hormone Therapies for Prostate Cancer (Androgen Deprivation Therapy)

DRUG	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/UNIQUE CONCERNS
Gonadotropin-Releasing Hormone (GnRH) Agonists: also referred to as luteinizing hormone-releasing hormone (LHRH) agonists; cause an initial surge in testosterone, followed by a gradual reduction through a negative feedback mechanism.	
Leuprolide *(Lupron Depot, Eligard, Camcevi)* IM injection, SC injection **Goserelin *(Zoladex)*** SC injection Histrelin *(Supprelin LA)* SC injection Triptorelin *(Trelstar)* IM injection	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Pregnancy, breastfeeding **SIDE EFFECTS** Hot flashes, impotence, gynecomastia, bone pain, QT prolongation, injection site pain, dyslipidemia, hyperglycemia Risk of osteoporosis due to ↓ bone mineral density (consider Ca and vitamin D supplementation, weight-bearing exercise, DEXA screening) **NOTES** Tumor flare: prevent with concurrent use of an antiandrogen (e.g., bicalutamide)
Gonadotropin-Releasing Hormone (GnRH) Antagonists: block GnRH receptors directly causing a rapid decrease in testosterone production.	
Degarelix *(Firmagon)* SC injection Relugolix *(Orgovyx)* Oral	**SIDE EFFECTS** Hot flashes, hypersensitivity reactions, QT prolongation, hyperglycemia **NOTES** No tumor flare; antiandrogen not needed
Antiandrogens, First-Generation: competitively inhibit testosterone from binding to prostate cancer cells.	
Bicalutamide *(Casodex)* Flutamide Nilutamide *(Nilandron)* Oral	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Bicalutamide: do not use in females Flutamide, nilutamide: severe hepatic impairment **SIDE EFFECTS** Hot flashes, gynecomastia, hepatotoxicity, ↑ risk of CVD Nilutamide: night blindness and disulfiram reactions (avoid alcohol)
Antiandrogen, Second-Generation	
Apalutamide *(Erleada)* Darolutamide *(Nubeqa)* Enzalutamide *(Xtandi)* Oral	**WARNINGS** Seizures, myocardial ischemia **SIDE EFFECTS** Hypertension, fatigue, ↑ LFTs, skin rash
Androgen Biosynthesis Inhibitor: interferes with CYP17 enzyme involved in the synthesis of steroid hormones in the testes and adrenal glands to decrease testosterone production.	
Abiraterone *(Zytiga, Yonsa)* Oral	**WARNINGS** Hepatotoxicity Mineralocorticoid excess: fluid retention, ↑ BP, hypokalemia (reduce excess with concurrent prednisone) **SIDE EFFECTS** Edema, hypertension, hot flashes, hyperglycemia, ↑ TGs, hypophosphatemia **NOTES** Major CYP3A4 substrate; avoid concurrent use with strong CYP3A4 inducers or inhibitors

OTHER CANCER-RELATED ISSUES

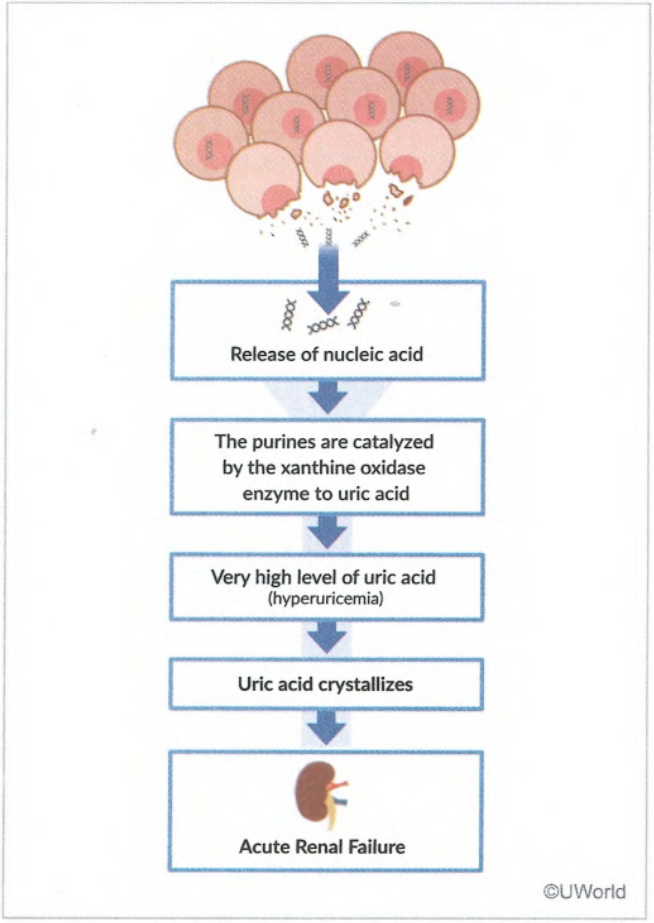
TUMOR LYSIS SYNDROME

Tumor lysis syndrome (TLS) is an oncologic emergency that is most often caused by chemotherapy initiation; it can also occur spontaneously in patients with a high tumor burden or tumors with a high proliferative rate (e.g., leukemia, non-Hodgkin lymphoma). TLS results from the rapid breakdown (lysis) of tumor cells and the release of intracellular components into the bloodstream, including potassium, phosphate, purines and pyrimidines (the base pairs that compose DNA). This leads to:

- Hyperkalemia, which can cause arrhythmias.
- Hyperphosphatemia; phosphate can bind to calcium and precipitate in soft tissues.
- Hypocalcemia, which can cause anorexia, nausea and seizures.
- Hyperuricemia, which can damage the kidneys (see image).
- Acute renal failure (from uric acid crystallization or phosphate accumulation in the renal tubules).

Patients with TLS (or those at high risk) should receive aggressive IV hydration with normal saline (to increase urine output and accelerate the excretion of excess intracellular components) and urate lowering therapies. If TLS occurs, additional management includes electrolyte correction (depending on the abnormality).

The xanthine oxidase enzyme is present in the blood and can readily convert large amounts of purines into uric acid. Allopurinol is a xanthine oxidase inhibitor that blocks this conversion. The usual initial dose of allopurinol for gout is ~100 mg daily, whereas higher doses (~400 – 800 mg/day) are indicated for TLS prevention and treatment. Allopurinol should be continued until TLS and any metabolic abnormalities have resolved. If allopurinol is not a reasonable option (e.g., risk of allopurinol-induced rash/severe skin reactions), febuxostat is an alternative agent.



Allopurinol and febuxostat are reviewed in detail in the Gout chapter.

Rasburicase is used for the initial management of TLS in high-risk patients (e.g., WBCs > 100,000 cells/mm^3, Burkitt lymphoma). It converts uric acid to a water-soluble metabolite (allantoin), which is easily excreted. Rasburicase is contraindicated in G6PD deficiency and should be immediately and permanently discontinued in any patient who develops hemolysis.

HYPERCALCEMIA OF MALIGNANCY

Certain cancers cause calcium to leach from bone into the blood, which over time can lead to weak bones prone to fracture. It also leads to hypercalcemia which can range from mild to severe in presentation. Patients with mild hypercalcemia (corrected calcium 10.6 – < 12 mg/dL) do not require immediate treatment (though hydration can be considered).

Moderate (corrected calcium 12 – 13.9 mg/dL) or severe (corrected calcium > 14 mg/dL) hypercalcemia can be symptomatic, presenting with nausea, vomiting, fatigue, dehydration and confusion. Treatment includes IV hydration with normal saline and medication to lower calcium levels. An IV bisphosphonate (e.g., pamidronate, zoledronic acid) is considered first line for moderate – severe hypercalcemia. In severe cases, calcitonin may be added (for up to 48 hours) to IV bisphosphonate therapy; the calcitonin treatment duration is short because tachyphylaxis (tolerance) develops quickly. Denosumab (a monoclonal antibody RANKL inhibitor) may be used for hypercalcemia refractory to IV bisphosphonates.

IV bisphosphonates and denosumab are common treatment options for osteoporosis (at different doses) and have the added benefit of building bone density and reducing fractures (see the Osteoporosis, Menopause & Testosterone Use chapter).

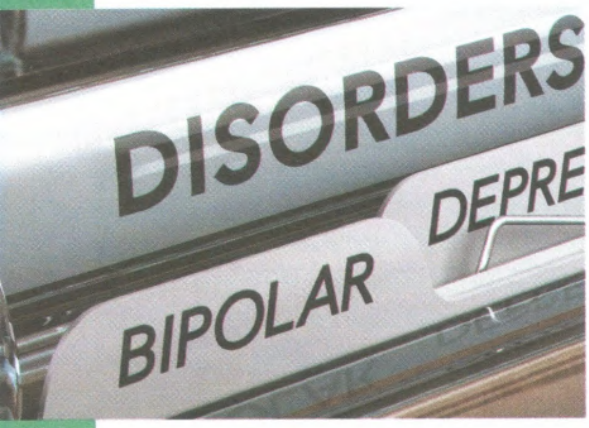
HYPERCALCEMIA OF MALIGNANCY TREATMENT

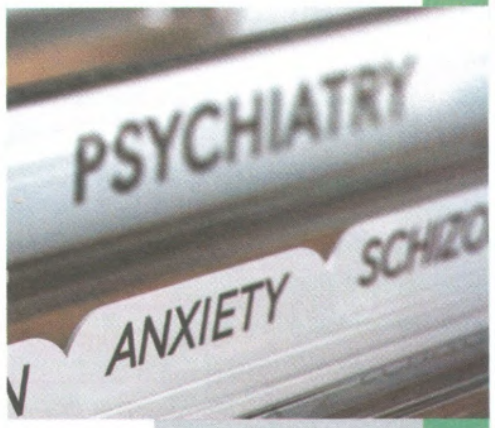
TREATMENT	MECHANISM OF ACTION	NOTES
Hydration with normal saline	↑ renal calcium excretion	Onset: minutes to hours
IV Bisphosphonates **Zoledronic Acid *(Zometa)*** 4 mg IV once **Pamidronate** 60-90 mg IV over 2-24 hrs once	Inhibits bone resorption by stopping osteoclast function	Onset: 24-72 hours; may repeat dose in 7 days if needed Do not confuse *Zometa* with *Reclast*, which is dosed 5 mg IV yearly for osteoporosis
Calcitonin *(Miacalcin)* 4-8 units/kg IM/SC Q12H	Inhibits bone resorption, ↑ renal calcium excretion	Onset: 2-6 hours Nasal spray formulation is not effective for the treatment of hypercalcemia Limit duration of therapy to 48 hours due to tachyphylaxis
Denosumab *(Xgeva)* 120 mg SC once weekly for up to 3 doses, then monthly for persistent hypercalcemia	Prevents osteoclast formation by blocking the interaction between RANKL and RANK (a receptor on osteoclasts)	Onset: 24-72 hours Do not confuse with *Prolia*, which is dosed 60 mg SC every 6 months for osteoporosis

Select Guidelines/References

American Cancer Society. www.cancer.org (accessed 2025 Jan 15)
National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN). www.nccn.org (accessed 2025 Jan 15)
American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO). www.asco.org (accessed 2025 Jan 15)

PSYCHIATRIC CONDITIONS





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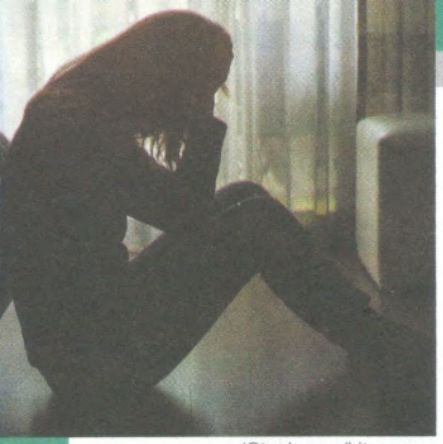

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CHAPTER 62

DEPRESSION

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= Study Tip Gal = Key Drugs Guy

BACKGROUND

Major Depressive Disorder (MDD, referred to here as "depression") is one of the most common health conditions in the world. People with depression suffer greatly from persistent feelings of hopelessness, dejection, constant worry, poor concentration, a lack of energy, an inability to sleep and, sometimes, suicidal tendencies.

In 2021, approximately 21 million adults (~8.3% of people) in the United States experienced a major depressive episode. About half of those with a first depression episode recover and experience no further episodes. Other patients experience persistent or recurrent depression; the risk of recurrence increases with each episode. After three episodes, the recurrence risk is nearly 100% without ongoing treatment.

CAUSES

The causes of depression are poorly understood but involve some combination of genetic, biologic and environmental factors. Certain drugs can also cause or worsen depression (see Key Drugs Guy).

Neurotransmitters believed to be involved in depression include serotonin (5-HT), dopamine (DA) norepinephrine (NE), epinephrine (Epi), glutamate and acetylcholine (ACh). 5-HT may be the most important neurotransmitter involved with feelings of well-being.

SELECT DRUGS AND CONDITIONS THAT CAUSE OR WORSEN DEPRESSION

ADHD medications
Atomoxetine

Analgesics
Indomethacin

Antiretrovirals
NNRTIs: efavirenz, rilpivirine

INSTIs (e.g., dolutegravir)

Cardiovascular medications
Beta-blockers (especially propranolol)

Hormones
Hormonal contraceptives

Anabolic steroids

Immunosuppressants
Systemic steroids

Interferons

Other
Benzodiazepines

Ethanol

Varenicline

Medical conditions that can contribute to depression: Parkinson disease, dementia, multiple sclerosis, hypothyroidism, low vitamin D levels, metabolic conditions (e.g., hypercalcemia), malignancy, overactive bladder, stroke.

DIAGNOSIS

The diagnosis of depression is difficult because it is not possible to measure brain chemical imbalances; it relies on symptom assessment according to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition (DSM-5) (see Study Tip Gal on the next page).

The Hamilton Depression Rating Scale (HDRS, also known as the Ham-D) is the most widely used depression assessment scale. It is designed to be used in a medical office. The patient rates their symptoms of depression on a numerical scale, and the total score indicates the presence and severity of depression.

DEPRESSION DIAGNOSIS

DSM-5 Criteria
At least 5 of the following symptoms are present during the same two week period (must include depressed mood or diminished interest/pleasure):

Mood - depressed

Sleep - increased/decreased

Interest/pleasure - diminished

Guilt or feelings of worthlessness

Energy - decreased

Concentration - decreased

Appetite - increased/decreased

Psychomotor agitation or retardation

Suicidal ideation

Remember: **M SIG E CAPS**

CONCURRENT BIPOLAR OR ANXIETY DISORDERS

Patients with bipolar disorder usually cycle between mania and depression and are treated with mood stabilizers (drugs that prevent either state). Patients with suspected depression should have bipolar disorder ruled out because starting antidepressant therapy can induce mania or cause rapid-cycling between bipolar depression and mania. Screening forms to assess mood and identify mania symptoms include questions such as "Do you ever have periods of time where you speak faster than normal or have racing thoughts?".

Benzodiazepines (BZDs) are often used to treat anxiety, although they are not first-line. When depression and anxiety occur together, BZDs should not be used alone; they can worsen and/or mask depression and can be problematic in patients with concurrent substance use disorders (called Dual Diagnosis). The risk for physiological dependence, withdrawal symptoms (e.g., tachycardia, anxiety), respiratory depression and death (especially when given with opioids or other CNS depressants) is discussed in the Anxiety Disorders chapter.

NATURAL PRODUCTS

St. John's wort, SAMe (S-adenosyl-L-methionine), 5-HTP (5-hydroxytryptophan) or valerian may be helpful for treating depression, but there is less evidence of efficacy than with standard treatments. St John's wort carries a weak recommendation for use in patients who prefer natural medicines (if they are not pregnant or breastfeeding).

Safety concerns with most of these products (except valerian) includes an increased risk of serotonin syndrome; therefore, they should not be used with other serotonergic drugs. In addition, St. John's wort is a CYP450 enzyme inducer with a high potential for causing drug interactions.

DRUG TREATMENT

The initial treatment of depression (regardless of severity) can include psychotherapy alone [e.g., cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)], medication alone or a combination of both. Because efficacy across antidepressant classes is generally comparable, the initial medication choice is based on the side effect profile, patient-specific factors (e.g., weight concerns, sleep patterns) and antidepressant use history. For most patients, an SSRI or SNRI is preferred, but other agents (e.g., mirtazapine, bupropion) may be considered in patients with specific comorbidities.

Antidepressant medications can take weeks to produce a noticeable effect. Physical symptoms (e.g., low energy) improve within 1 – 2 weeks but psychological symptoms (e.g., low mood) may take a month or longer (see Lag Effect and Suicide Prevention on the next page).

Treatment can require one or more medication trials. If a drug does not work after a suitable trial of at least 4 – 8 weeks, treatment should be reassessed (see Treatment-Resistant Depression). Patient expectations should be established to prevent medication discontinuation prematurely, and appropriate follow up and reassessments are essential to prevent continuation of medications despite an inadequate response.

DEPRESSION IN PREGNANCY AND POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION

Guideline recommendations for the treatment of depression during pregnancy and postpartum are provided by The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG). Untreated depression during pregnancy, especially in the late second or early third trimesters, is associated with increased rates of adverse outcomes (e.g., premature birth, low birth weight, postnatal complications). However, drug treatment carries a risk of adverse effects for the mother and unborn baby and therefore the risks versus benefits must be considered carefully.

Psychotherapy is the first-line treatment for mild to moderate depression during pregnancy. If a patient is taking antidepressants and wishes to become pregnant, the drug may be tapered off. In more severe cases, medications may be necessary and the following should be considered:

- If the patient was successfully treated with an antidepressant before pregnancy, consideration should be given to continuing the same medication during pregnancy.
- If the patient was not taking an antidepressant before pregnancy, SSRIs such as sertraline or escitalopram, are first-line options. Paroxetine should be avoided due to its potential adverse cardiac effects.
    - Although preferred, SSRIs have a warning for risk of persistent pulmonary hypertension of the newborn (PPHN) when used during pregnancy.

Depression that occurs after childbirth (i.e., postpartum depression) can have adverse outcomes for the mother, baby and family. Psychotherapy is advocated for mild to moderate cases. If medication treatment is necessary, the risks to a breastfed infant should be considered.

- SSRIs are preferred.
- Oral zuranolone *(Zurzuvae)* is a C-IV drug that can be considered for moderate to severe postpartum depression in select patients.

SAFETY ISSUES WITH ANTIDEPRESSANTS

Many antidepressants (e.g., SSRIs, SNRIs, trazodone mirtazapine, monoamine oxidase inhibitors) increase serotonin levels and can increase the risk of serotonin syndrome, especially if used with one or more serotonergic medications (e.g., tramadol, lithium, buspirone, triptans, dextromethorphan, St. John's wort). Symptoms of serotonin syndrome include nausea, diarrhea, tachycardia, dizziness, headache, agitation, hallucinations and muscle rigidity.

Abrupt discontinuation of an antidepressant can cause withdrawal symptoms (e.g., anxiety, agitation, insomnia, dizziness, flu-like syndrome). If an antidepressant is being discontinued, it should generally be tapered over several weeks to avoid withdrawal. An exception is fluoxetine, which self-tapers because of its long half-life. Pharmacists must counsel patients about the risk of withdrawal symptoms and to not discontinue treatment without discussing with a healthcare provider.

BOXED WARNINGS & MEDGUIDES

All antidepressants carry a boxed warning for possible increase in suicidal thoughts or actions in some children, teenagers or young adults within the first few months of treatment or when the dose is changed. MedGuides are required for all antidepressants for this reason.

LAG EFFECT AND SUICIDE PREVENTION

A potential cause of the increased suicide risk early in treatment is the lag effect of antidepressant medications, whereby physical symptoms improve before psychological symptoms (see Drug Treatment section on last page). Patients and caregivers must be educated about the risk of suicide early in treatment and to contact a healthcare provider if changes in mood, behavior, thoughts or feelings are observed.

If a patient reports suicidal ideation, they should be referred to the emergency department, the suicide hotline or elsewhere for help. If someone has a plan to attempt suicide, the threat is likely immediate.

SELECTIVE SEROTONIN REUPTAKE INHIBITORS

Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) increase 5-HT by inhibiting its reuptake in the neuronal synapse.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Citalopram *(Celexa)*	20-40 mg/day Max dose: 40 mg/day Max dose if > 60 years old: 20 mg/day	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Do not use with MAO inhibitors (see SSRI Drug Interactions) Sertraline solution: use with disulfiram Paroxetine capsules (used during menopause): pregnancy **WARNINGS** QT prolongation: do not exceed citalopram 20 mg/day if age > 60 years, liver disease, CYP2C19 poor metabolizer or taking 2C19 inhibitors; do not exceed escitalopram 10 mg/day in older adults SIADH/hyponatremia, fall risk (Beers Criteria: avoid if history of falls/fracture or using CNS depressants) Bleeding (additive risk; see SSRI Drug Interactions) **SIDE EFFECTS** Sexual side effects: ↓ libido, anorgasmia, erectile dysfunction Somnolence, insomnia, nausea, dry mouth, headache, diaphoresis (dose-related), weakness, tremor, dizziness Most activating: fluoxetine; take in AM Most sedating: paroxetine, fluvoxamine; take in PM Others: take in the AM; if sedation, take in PM Osteopenia/osteoporosis, restless leg syndrome **NOTES** Fluoxetine, paroxetine CR and sertraline are also approved for premenstrual dysphoric disorder (PMDD); dosing is continuous or intermittent [e.g., only during the luteal phase (day 14 to menses), only when symptoms begin] All available in solution except fluvoxamine Sertraline is preferred in patients with cardiac risk
Escitalopram *(Lexapro)* – S-enantiomer of citalopram	10 mg/day Max dose: 20 mg/day Max dose in older adults: 10 mg/day	
Fluoxetine *(Prozac)* + olanzapine *(Symbyax)* – for treatment-resistant depression	IR: 10-60 mg/day Max dose: 80 mg/day If stable on IR 20 mg daily, can convert to delayed-release 90 mg once weekly	
Paroxetine *(Paxil, Paxil CR)* *Brisdelle* – capsule for menopause-associated vasomotor symptoms	IR: 10-50 mg/day CR: 12.5-62.5 mg/day 10 mg IR = 12.5 mg CR	
Sertraline *(Zoloft)*	50-200 mg/day	
Fluvoxamine IR/ER Approved only for OCD	50-300 mg/day	

SSRI DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Concurrent use of SSRIs and MAO inhibitors can cause hypertensive crisis or serotonin syndrome.
  - A two-week washout period is required when switching from MAO inhibitors to SSRIs and vice versa. Fluoxetine is the exception; due to its long half life (4 – 6 days), a five-week washout period is required if switching from fluoxetine.
  - Avoid concurrent use of SSRIs with linezolid or IV methylene blue due to the risk of serotonin syndrome.
- QT prolongation most consistently noted with citalopram and escitalopram (see max doses). Additive QT prolongation risk with SSRIs and other QT-prolonging drugs (see Arrhythmias chapter).
- ↑ bleeding risk (due to SSRI antiplatelet effects) when used with anticoagulants, antiplatelets, NSAIDs, select natural products (e.g., ginkgo, garlic, ginger, ginseng, glucosamine, fish oils) and thrombolytics.
- Fluoxetine, paroxetine and fluvoxamine are CYP2D6 inhibitors:
  - They decrease tamoxifen efficacy (tamoxifen is a prodrug converted to its active form by CYP2D6). Venlafaxine (an SNRI) is preferred to treat vasomotor side effects from tamoxifen.
  - Some antipsychotics (e.g., olanzapine) that are CYP2D6 substrates may require a lower dose if used in combination with these SSRIs.

SSRI COMBINED MECHANISM

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
SSRI and 5-HT1A Partial Agonist		
Vilazodone *(Viibryd, Viibryd Starter Pack)*	Start at 10 mg daily × 7 days, then 20 mg daily (dosing in patient starter kit); max 40 mg/day Take with food	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Do not use within 14 days of MAO inhibitors; do not use with linezolid or IV methylene blue **WARNINGS** Seizures (avoid in patients with seizure history) **SIDE EFFECTS** N/V/D, insomnia, ↓ libido (less sexual SEs than SSRI/SNRIs), constipation (vortioxetine) **NOTES** Vortioxetine: ↓ dose by 50% when used with strong CYP2D6 inhibitors (e.g., bupropion, fluoxetine, paroxetine, quinidine)
SSRI, 5-HT3 Receptor Antagonist and 5-HT1A Agonist		
Vortioxetine *(Trintellix)*	5-20 mg/day, with or without food	

SEROTONIN AND NOREPINEPHRINE REUPTAKE INHIBITORS

Serotonin and norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (SNRIs) increase 5-HT by inhibiting its reuptake in the neuronal synapse (similar to SSRIs) and also inhibit reuptake of norepinephrine (NE). This explains the differences in indications and side effect profiles compared to SSRIs.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Venlafaxine *(Effexor XR)* Different generics; check *Orange Book*	37.5-375 mg/day Max dose: IR: 375 mg/day ER: 225 mg/day	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Do not use with MAO inhibitors (see SNRI Drug Interactions) **WARNINGS** SIADH/hyponatremia, fall risk (Beers Criteria: avoid if history of falls/fractures or using CNS depressants) Bleeding (additive risk; see SNRI Drug Interactions) **SIDE EFFECTS** Similar to SSRIs (due to ↓ 5-HT reuptake) Additional side effects due ↑ NE: ↑ HR, dilated pupils (can lead to glaucoma), constipation, excessive sweating ↑ BP; greatest risk with venlafaxine > 150 mg/day (but they all have risk, especially at high doses) Can affect urethral resistance; caution when using SNRIs in patients prone to obstructive urinary disorders **NOTES** *Pristiq* can leave a ghost tablet (empty shell) in the stool
Duloxetine *(Cymbalta)* Also indicated for peripheral neuropathy, fibromyalgia and chronic musculoskeletal pain (due to ↑ NE)	40-60 mg/day Max: 120 mg/day (though no benefit > 60 mg/day) CrCl < 30 mL/min: avoid use	
Desvenlafaxine *(Pristiq)*	50 mg/day Max: 100 mg/day (though no benefit > 50 mg/day)	
Levomilnacipran *(Fetzima)*	Start 20 mg/day, can titrate no sooner than every 2 days Max: 120 mg/day CrCl < 15 mL/min: avoid use	

SNRI DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Concurrent use of SNRIs and MAO inhibitors can cause hypertensive crisis or serotonin syndrome.
  - A 14-day washout period is recommended when switching between SNRIs and MAO inhibitors.
  - Avoid concurrent use of SNRIs and linezolid or IV methylene blue due to the risk of serotonin syndrome.
- Additive QT prolongation risk when venlafaxine is used with other QT-prolonging drugs (see Arrhythmias chapter).
- SNRIs can increase BP; use caution, especially with high doses, and monitor BP more frequently in patients taking antihypertensive medications.
- ↑ bleeding risk (due to SNRI antiplatelet effects) when used with anticoagulants, antiplatelets, NSAIDs, select natural products (e.g., ginkgo, garlic, ginger, ginseng, glucosamine, fish oils) and thrombolytics.
- Duloxetine is a moderate CYP2D6 inhibitor and can decrease the effects of tamoxifen (a prodrug converted to its active metabolite by CYP2D6).

TRICYCLICS

Tricyclic antidepressants (TCAs) inhibit NE and 5-HT reuptake. They also block ACh and histamine receptors. There are two categories of TCAs: secondary amines and tertiary amines. Secondary amines are more selective for NE and have less side effects. Tertiary amines are less selective, which can contribute to a slightly higher efficacy but more anticholinergic and antihistamine side effects (e.g., sedation, weight gain).

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
TERTIARY AMINES **Amitriptyline** **Doxepin** *Silenor – for* insomnia *Zonalon* cream – for pruritus Clomipramine Imipramine Trimipramine	**Amitriptyline:** 100-300 mg/day QHS or in divided doses **Doxepin:** 100-300 mg/day	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Do not use with MAO inhibitors (see Tricyclic Drug Interactions); myocardial infarction; glaucoma and urinary retention (doxepin) **SIDE EFFECTS** **Cardiotoxicity** QT prolongation; obtain baseline ECG if cardiac risk factors or age > 50 years; monitor for suicidal ideation (an intended overdose can quickly cause fatal arrhythmias) Orthostasis, tachycardia **Anticholinergic** Dry mouth, blurred vision, urinary retention, constipation (taper off to avoid cholinergic rebound) Vivid dreams, weight gain (varies by drug and patient), sedation, sweating, myoclonus (a symptom of drug toxicity) Fall risk (Beers Criteria: avoid if history of falls/fracture or using CNS depressants) **Seizures** Higher doses ↑ risk
SECONDARY AMINES **Nortriptyline *(Pamelor*)*** Amoxapine Desipramine Protriptyline	**Nortriptyline:** 25-150 mg/day QHS or in divided doses	

**Brand discontinued but name still used in practice.*

TRICYCLIC DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Concurrent use of TCAs and MAO inhibitors can cause hypertensive crisis or serotonin syndrome.
  - A two-week washout period is required when switching between MAO inhibitors and TCAs.
  - Avoid concurrent use of TCAs and linezolid or IV methylene blue due to serotonin syndrome risk.
- Additive QT prolongation risk when TCAs are used with other QT-prolonging drugs (see Arrhythmias chapter).
- Metabolized by CYP2D6; check for drug interactions.

DOPAMINE AND NOREPINEPHRINE REUPTAKE INHIBITOR

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Bupropion *(Wellbutrin SR, Wellbutrin XL,* Aplenzin, *Forfivo XL)* + dextromethorphan *(Auvelity)* – ER tablet for depression ***Wellbutrin XL*** and *Aplenzin* – also approved for seasonal affective disorder (SAD) **Bupropion SR** – for smoking cessation + naltrexone *(Contrave)* – for weight management	150-450 mg daily ■ Bupropion IR is TID ■ *Wellbutrin SR* is BID ■ *Wellbutrin XL* is daily Do not exceed 450 mg/day due to seizure risk *Auvelity:* BID (at least 8 hours apart)	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Do not use with MAO inhibitors or other forms of bupropion (see Bupropion Drug Interactions), seizure disorder, history of anorexia/bulimia, abrupt discontinuation of ethanol or sedatives **WARNINGS** Neuropsychiatric adverse events possible when used for smoking cessation (can include mood changes, hallucinations, paranoia, aggression, anxiety) **SIDE EFFECTS** Dry mouth, CNS stimulation (insomnia, restlessness), tremors/seizures (dose-related), weight loss, headache/migraine, nausea/vomiting, constipation and possible blood pressure changes (more likely to ↑ BP than ↓ BP) Sexual dysfunction is rare (no effect on 5-HT); can use if issues occur with other antidepressants *Auvelity:* dizziness, excessive sweating

BUPROPION DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Concurrent use of bupropion and MAO inhibitors can cause hypertensive crisis.
  - A two-week washout is required when switching between MAO inhibitors and bupropion.
  - Avoid concurrent use of bupropion and linezolid or IV methylene blue.
- Use only one formulation of bupropion at a time. Concurrent use of different formulations (i.e., IR, SR, XL) for different indications increases the risk of toxicity (e.g., seizures).

MONOAMINE OXIDASE INHIBITORS

Monoamine oxidase (MAO) inhibitors inhibit the monoamine oxidase enzyme, which breaks down catecholamines, including 5-HT, NE, Epi and DA. If these NTs increase dramatically, hypertensive crisis and death can result.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Isocarboxazid *(Marplan)*	20 mg/day in divided doses Max: 60 mg/day	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Do not use with serotonergic drugs, sympathomimetics or tyramine-rich foods (see MAO Inhibitor Drug Interactions) History of cardiovascular disease, cerebrovascular defect, headache, hepatic disease, pheochromocytoma Severe renal disease (isocarboxazid, phenelzine) **SIDE EFFECTS** **Anticholinergic** Dry mouth, blurred vision, urinary retention, constipation (taper off to avoid cholinergic rebound) Sedation (except tranylcypromine causes stimulation), weight gain **Other** Sexual dysfunction, orthostasis, headache, insomnia
Phenelzine *(Nardil)*	15 mg TID Max: 60-90 mg/day	
Tranylcypromine *(Parnate)*	30 mg/day in divided doses Max dose: 60 mg/day	

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Selegiline transdermal patch *(Emsam)* MAO-B selective inhibitor *Zelapar* (ODT) – for Parkinson disease	6-12 mg patch/day	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Do not use with serotonergic drugs (see MAO Inhibitor Drug Interactions), pheochromocytoma **SIDE EFFECTS** Constipation, gas, dry mouth, loss of appetite, sexual dysfunction

MAO INHIBITOR DRUG INTERACTIONS

- To avoid serotonin syndrome, hypertensive crisis or psychosis, MAO inhibitors cannot be used with drugs or food that increase 5-HT, Epi, NE or DA.
  - Contraindicated drugs that ↑ serotonin: SSRIs, SNRIs, TCAs, linezolid, lithium, tramadol, opioids, St. John's wort, mirtazapine, trazodone, triptans, buspirone and dextromethorphan.
  - Contraindicated drugs that ↑ epinephrine: SNRIs, bupropion, levodopa, linezolid, methylene blue, stimulants used for ADHD and OTC diet pills/herbal weight loss products.
  - Contraindicated tyramine-rich foods that ↑ norepinephrine: aged (e.g., aged cheeses, air-dried meats), fermented (e.g., yeast extract, soy sauce, sauerkraut), pickled (e.g., pickled herring) or smoked foods, as well as fava beans and some red wines and beers (tap beer and any beer that has not been pasteurized; canned and bottled beers contain little or no tyramine).

MAO INHIBITORS – KEEP THEM SEPARATED

To avoid serotonin syndrome and hypertensive crisis*

- 2-week washout is required between MAO inhibitors and:
  - SSRIs (except fluoxetine, see below)
  - SNRIs
  - TCAs
  - Bupropion
- 5-week washout is required when changing from:
  - Fluoxetine → MAO inhibitor (due to fluoxetine's long half-life)

**See the Drug Interactions and Basic Science Concepts chapters for more information on serotonin syndrome and hypertensive crisis with MAO inhibitors.*

MISCELLANEOUS ANTIDEPRESSANTS

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Tetracyclic antidepressant: has central presynaptic alpha-2 antagonist effects, which ↑ release of NE and 5-HT		
Mirtazapine *(Remeron, Remeron SolTab)* Commonly used to help with sleep (dosed QHS) & to ↑ appetite (can ↑ weight in frail, older adults)	15-45 mg QHS	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Do not use with MAO inhibitors, linezolid or IV methylene blue **WARNINGS** QT prolongation, blood dyscrasias, CNS depression **SIDE EFFECTS** Sedation, ↑ appetite, weight gain, dry mouth, dizziness
Inhibits 5-HT reuptake and blocks H1 and alpha-1 adrenergic receptors		
Trazodone Rarely used as an antidepressant due to sedation; used primarily off-label for sleep	IR: 150-400 mg/day in divided doses ER: 150-375 mg QHS Sleep: 50-100 mg QHS	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Do not use with MAO inhibitors, linezolid or IV methylene blue **SIDE EFFECTS** Sedation, orthostasis (risk for falls in older patients) Sexual dysfunction and risk of priapism (painful erection longer than 4 hours, which is a medical emergency)

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Inhibits 5-HT and NE reuptake and blocks 5-HT2 and alpha-1 adrenergic receptors		
Nefazodone Rarely used due to hepatotoxicity	200-600 mg/day divided BID	**BOXED WARNING** Hepatotoxicity **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Hepatic disease; concurrent use with MAO inhibitors, carbamazepine, cisapride, pimozide or triazolam **SIDE EFFECTS** Similar to trazodone, but less sedating

DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Avoid use with other serotonergic drugs due to an increased risk of serotonin syndrome.
- Avoid use with MAO inhibitors due to an increased risk of hypertensive crisis.
- Mirtazapine, trazodone: additive QT prolongation risk when used with other QT-prolonging drugs (see the Arrhythmias chapter).
- Additive sedation; avoid use of other sedating medications with mirtazapine and trazodone.

SELECTING THE BEST ANTIDEPRESSANT

General Principles

The antidepressant selected should incorporate patient-specific information and history.

Did it work? If an antidepressant was taken at a reasonable dose for 4-8 weeks and did not work well, do not use it again.

Was it well-tolerated? Do not choose a treatment that was poorly tolerated in the past.

Does the patient have comorbid conditions that make a drug a good or a poor choice?

- Cardiac/QT risk
  - ☐ Sertraline preferred
  - ☐ Do not choose a QT-prolonging drug/dose (e.g., high doses of citalopram or escitalopram)
  - ☐ Watch for additive QT prolongation when SSRIs, SNRIs, TCAs, mirtazapine or trazodone are used with other QT-prolonging drugs (see the Arrhythmias chapter)
- Tobacco use
  - ☐ Consider bupropion SR for smoking cessation
- Peripheral neuropathy or pain
  - ☐ Consider duloxetine
- For serotonergic antidepressants
  - ☐ Avoid if patient is taking other serotonergic medications due to the risk of serotonin syndrome
  - ☐ There is an ↑ risk of bleeding when used with anticoagulants, antiplatelets, NSAIDs and some natural products (e.g., ginkgo, garlic, ginger, ginseng, glucosamine, fish oils)
- Seizure disorder or at risk for seizures (bulimia/anorexia, recent alcohol or sedative withdrawal)
  - ☐ Do not use bupropion
- Pregnant
  - ☐ Psychotherapy is first line for mild to moderate depression
  - ☐ Certain SSRIs (e.g., escitalopram, sertraline) are first line if using drug therapy
  - ☐ Do not use paroxetine
- Daytime sedation or insomnia
  - ☐ Take activating medications in the morning (e.g., fluoxetine, bupropion)
  - ☐ Take sedating medications at night (e.g., paroxetine, mirtazapine, trazodone)
- Sexual dysfunction
  - ☐ Higher risk with SSRIs and SNRIs
  - ☐ Lower risk with bupropion and mirtazapine

TREATMENT-RESISTANT DEPRESSION

Depression that does not fully respond to two full treatment trials is considered treatment-resistant. The American Psychiatric Association (APA) guidelines state that patients should receive a 4 – 8 week trial of medication at a therapeutic dose before concluding that a drug is not working. If the patient is not improving (i.e., making progress toward the treatment goal of remission) or has an incomplete response, the following should be considered:

- Change to a different antidepressant.
- Increase the antidepressant dose.
- Use a combination of antidepressants with different mechanisms of action.
- Add adjunctive treatment to augment antidepressant therapy. Options include:
  - A low dose of an atypical antipsychotic: aripiprazole, olanzapine/fluoxetine, quetiapine extended-release, brexpiprazole or cariprazine.
  - Buspirone, esketamine, lithium, thyroid hormone (i.e., T3) or electroconvulsive therapy (ECT).
  - Similar to antidepressants, adjunctive drug treatments carry the same boxed warnings for a possible increase in suicidal thoughts and require MedGuides.

SELECT ADJUNCTIVE THERAPY IN TREATMENT-RESISTANT DEPRESSION

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Antipsychotics		
Aripiprazole *(Abilify, Abilify Maintena, Abilify MyCite)* Tablet, ODT, solution, injection Only oral formulations are indicated for treatment-resistant depression	Start 2-5 mg/day (QAM), can ↑ to 15 mg/day	**BOXED WARNING** Older adults with dementia-related psychosis treated with antipsychotic drugs have an ↑ risk of death **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Olanzapine/fluoxetine *(Symbyax):* do not use with MAO inhibitors, linezolid, IV methylene blue, pimozide or thioridazine Caution with other drugs/conditions that cause QT prolongation **WARNINGS** Neuroleptic malignant syndrome, tardive dyskinesia (TD), falls, leukopenia, neutropenia Multiorgan hypersensitivity (DRESS) reactions with olanzapine (in *Symbyax)* Pathological gambling, compulsive behaviors (aripiprazole) **SIDE EFFECTS** Metabolic adverse effects including dyslipidemia, weight gain and diabetes (highest risk with olanzapine and quetiapine, lower risk with aripiprazole) Orthostasis/dizziness (can lead to falls) Aripiprazole: insomnia, anxiety, akathisia, constipation Olanzapine and quetiapine: sedation Brexpiprazole: akathisia, dyspepsia, diarrhea Cariprazine: insomnia, EPS, dystonias, headache
Olanzapine/fluoxetine *(Symbyax)*	Start 6 mg/25 mg QHS (fluoxetine is activating but olanzapine is sedating)	
Quetiapine *(Seroquel, Seroquel XR)*	Start 50 mg QHS, can ↑ to 150-300 mg QHS	
Brexpiprazole *(Rexulti)* Also approved for treatment of agitation associated with dementia due to Alzheimer's disease	Start 0.5-1 mg/day, can ↑ to 3 mg/day (titrate weekly)	
Cariprazine *(Vraylar)*	Start 1.5 mg/day, can ↑ to 3 mg/day on day 15	

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
NMDA Receptor Antagonist		
Esketamine *(Spravato)* C-III Nasal spray Used as monotherapy or adjunctive therapy for treatment-resistant depression; also approved as adjunctive therapy for depression with suicidality	Start 56 mg intranasally twice weekly, can ↑ up to 84 mg weekly	**BOXED WARNING** Sedation, dissociation, respiratory depression, potential for abuse and misuse **NOTES** Only available through a restricted distribution system under the *Spravato* REMS program; must be administered under the supervision of a provider; monitor for adverse effects for at least 2 hours following administration

KEY COUNSELING POINTS

See the Drug Formulations & Patient Counseling chapter for counseling language/layman's terminology.

ALL ANTIDEPRESSANTS

- Can cause suicidal ideation.
- MedGuide required.
- Can take 1 – 2 weeks to feel a benefit from this drug and 6 – 8 weeks for full effects on mood.

SSRIs

- Can cause:
  - Sexual dysfunction.
  - Serotonin syndrome.
- Fluoxetine: take in the morning.

SNRIs

- Can cause:
  - Sexual dysfunction.
  - Serotonin syndrome.
  - Increased blood pressure.
  - Increased sweating.
- Ghost tablet in stool *(Pristiq)*.

TRICYCLICS

- Can cause:
  - Anticholinergic effects.
  - Orthostasis.

BUPROPION

- Can cause insomnia.

MAO INHIBITORS

- Can cause serotonin syndrome.
- Many drug and food interactions.

OTHER ANTIDEPRESSANTS

- Trazodone: take at bedtime.
  - Can cause priapism.
- Mirtazapine: take at bedtime.

Select Guidelines/References

Practice Guideline for the Treatment of Patients with Major Depressive Disorder, 2010. https://psychiatryonline.org/pb/assets/raw/sitewide/practice_guidelines/guidelines/mdd.pdf (accessed 2025 Feb 26)

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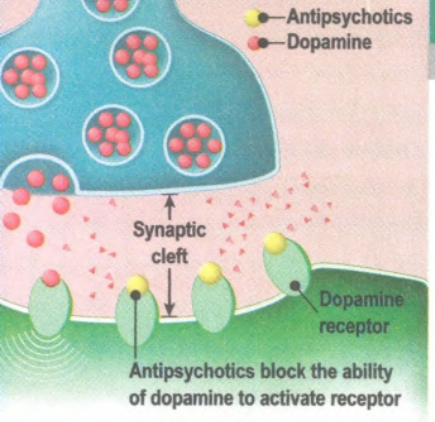

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CHAPTER 63

SCHIZOPHRENIA/ PSYCHOSIS

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= Study Tip Gal = Key Drugs Guy

BACKGROUND

Schizophrenia is a chronic, severe and disabling thought disorder that can affect all societies, regardless of class, race, religion or culture.

Hallmark symptoms of schizophrenia include:

- Hallucinations: sensing something that is not present, such as imaginary voices.
- Delusions: a belief about something real that is not true, such as imagining that your family (real) wishes to hurt you (delusion).
- Disorganized speech/behavior: inability to focus attention and communicate organized thoughts.

Schizophrenia ranges from relatively mild to severe. Some people can function adequately in daily life, while others need specialized, intensive care. Treatment adherence is important and often difficult to achieve, primarily due to lack of insight. Schizophrenia is associated with a high suicide rate.

The onset of symptoms usually begins in young adulthood. A diagnosis is based on behavior, which includes negative and positive signs and symptoms (described below). The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition (DSM-5) sets the diagnostic criteria for psychiatric conditions.

DSM-5 DIAGNOSTIC CRITERIA FOR SCHIZOPHRENIA

Note: delusions, hallucinations or disorganized speech must be present

Negative signs and symptoms	Positive signs and symptoms
Loss of interest in everyday activities	Hallucinations: can be auditory, visual or somatic
Lack of emotion (apathy)	Delusions: beliefs held by the patient that are without a basis in reality
Inability to plan or carry out activities	Disorganized speech/behavior, incoherent speech, often on unrelated topics, purposeless behavior, or difficulty speaking and organizing thoughts, such as stopping in mid-sentence or jumbling together meaningless words
Poor hygiene	Difficulty paying attention
Social withdrawal	
Loss of motivation (avolition)	
Lack of speech (alogia)	

PATHOPHYSIOLOGY

The pathophysiology of schizophrenia is multifactorial and includes altered brain structure and chemistry, primarily involving dopamine, serotonin and glutamine. Genetics (inherited susceptibility) and environmental factors (e.g., stress) contribute to disease risk. In addition to neurotransmitter imbalances and stressors, psychosis can be caused or exacerbated by medications and recreational substances (see Key Drugs Guy below).

Other medical conditions (e.g., neurosyphilis, Parkinson disease, postpartum psychosis, systemic lupus erythematosus) can also cause psychosis. Specifically in Parkinson disease, motor symptoms are treated with medications that ↑ dopamine in the brain. This increased dopamine can worsen hallucinations or delusions in patients with Parkinson disease.

MEDICATIONS/RECREATIONAL DRUGS THAT CAN CAUSE PSYCHOTIC SYMPTOMS

Anticholinergics (centrally-acting, ↑ doses)

Dextromethorphan

Dopamine or dopamine agonists (e.g., ropinirole, pramipexole, carbidopa/levodopa)

Efavirenz

Interferons

Ketamine

Levetiracetam

Quinolones

Stimulants (e.g., amphetamine salts, methylphenidate)

Systemic steroids (esp with ↑ doses)

Illicit/recreational substances

Cannabis

Cocaine

Lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD)

Methamphetamine

Phencyclidine (PCP)

Synthetic cathinones (bath salts, MDPV)

DRUG TREATMENT

Most antipsychotics, the first line treatment for schizophrenia, primarily block dopamine receptors. Decreasing dopamine activity helps control psychosis, but negatively affects dopamine pathways involved in focus, attention and movement.

- Drug therapy can effectively treat positive symptoms (e.g., hallucinations, delusions).
- Negative symptoms (e.g., lack of motivation, cognitive and functional impairment) are more difficult to treat.
- First-generation antipsychotics (FGAs) have a high incidence of extrapyramidal symptoms (EPS) (see Study Tip Gal below).
- Second-generation antipsychotics (SGAs), also called atypical antipsychotics, are preferred over FGAs due to a lower incidence of EPS, yet there are many patients who are stabilized on FGAs and in some initial cases, they may be preferred.

SGAs block serotonin and dopamine receptors. Newer medications for schizophrenia may block other receptors as well. For example, xanomeline/trospium *(Cobenfy)* functions as a muscarinic agonist in the CNS and a muscarinic antagonist in peripheral tissues.

EXTRAPYRAMIDAL SIDE EFFECTS

Extrapyramidal side effects (EPS) are a group of side effects related to irregular movements that can be caused by antipsychotics. If EPS occurs, the antipsychotic regimen should be adjusted (e.g. lower dose, switch medication), when possible.

Akathisia (occurs within days to weeks)
- Restlessness with anxiety and an inability to remain still
- Treated with benzodiazepines or propranolol

Dystonia (occurs within 24-96 hours)
- Prolonged contraction of muscles, including painful muscle spasms; life threatening if airway is compromised; higher risk in young males
- Centrally-acting anticholinergics (e.g., diphenhydramine, benztropine) can be used for prophylaxis or treatment

Parkinsonism (occurs within days to weeks)
- Looks similar to Parkinson disease, with tremors, abnormal gait and bradykinesia
- Treated with anticholinergics; amantadine can be used as an alternative

Tardive dyskinesia (TD) (occurs within months to years)
- See Tardive Dyskinesia section later in the chapter

FORMULATIONS

Adherence to antipsychotics is poor, primarily due to lack of insight (i.e., inability of the patient to recognize the illness). Various formulations are available to increase adherence. See the Study Tip Gal (Formulation Considerations) later in the chapter.

- Long-acting injections [given intramuscularly (IM) or subcutaneously (SC)] eliminate daily oral dosing.
- Orally disintegrating tablets (ODTs) are useful with dysphagia and prevent cheeking (when tablets are hidden inside the cheek and spit out later). ODTs dissolve quickly in the mouth.
- Oral solutions/suspensions are useful for children and people with a feeding tube (e.g., PEG tube).
- Acute IM injections provide "stat" relief to calm an agitated, psychotic patient for their own safety and the safety of others.

- ☐ IM antipsychotics can be mixed with other drugs (in "cocktails"), such as a benzodiazepine for anxiolytic/sedative effects and an anticholinergic to reduce dystonia (e.g., haloperidol, lorazepam and diphenhydramine).
- ☐ IM olanzapine and a parenteral benzodiazepine should not be given together due to risk of excessive sedation and difficulty breathing.

BOXED WARNINGS/OTHER WARNINGS

Antipsychotics are not indicated for agitation control in older adults with dementia-related psychosis. There is an increased risk of mortality when used for this purpose, mostly due to cardiovascular conditions (e.g., heart failure, sudden death) and infection. Several antipsychotics also carry a warning for an increased risk of stroke in patients with dementia. All antipsychotics carry a warning for falls.

FIRST-GENERATION ANTIPSYCHOTICS

First-generation antipsychotics (FGAs) work by blocking dopamine-2 (D2) receptors, with little serotonin (5-HT2A) receptor blockade. Many of the FGAs are in the phenothiazine class; they can be recognized because their names end in "-azine" (e.g., thioridazine, fluphenazine).

FIRST-GENERATION ANTIPSYCHOTICS (FGAs)

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Low Potency		**BOXED WARNINGS** Elderly with dementia-related psychosis: ↑ risk death from antipsychotics Thioridazine: QT prolongation *Adasuve:* bronchospasm (REMS program) **WARNINGS** Cardiovascular effects: QT prolongation (↑ risk with parenteral administration and with thioridazine, haloperidol, chlorpromazine), orthostasis/falls, tachycardia Anticholinergic effects: constipation, xerostomia, blurred vision, urinary retention CNS depression Extrapyramidal symptoms (EPS): ↑ risk with injectable formulations Hyperprolactinemia: infertility, oligomenorrhea/amenorrhea (fewer or no menstrual periods), galactorrhea (abnormal breast discharge), erectile dysfunction/↓ libido Neuroleptic malignant syndrome (NMS): see end of chapter Blood dyscrasias (leukopenia, neutropenia and agranulocytosis), ocular effects **SIDE EFFECTS** Sedation, dizziness, anticholinergic effects, ↑ prolactin, EPS (see Warnings) *Adasuve:* dysgeusia (bad, bitter, or metallic taste in mouth) Injections (haloperidol, fluphenazine): injection site pain/redness **NOTES** All FGAs cause sedation and EPS; lower potency drugs have ↑ sedation and ↓ EPS and higher potency drugs have ↓ sedation and ↑ EPS
Chlorpromazine	300-1,000 mg/day, divided	
Thioridazine	300-800 mg/day, divided	
Mid Potency		
Loxapine *(Adasuve* - inhalation powder for acute agitation)	30-100 mg/day, divided	
Perphenazine	8-64 mg/day, divided	
High Potency		
Haloperidol *(Haldol Decanoate)* Tablet, oral solution, injection Class: butyrophenone Also used for Tourette syndrome (for tics and vocal outbursts)	PO: start 0.5-2 mg BID-TID, up to 30 mg/day IV: usually 5-10 mg Decanoate (monthly): IM only; for conversion from PO, use 10-20× the PO dose	
Fluphenazine Tablet, elixir, injection	6-12 mg/day, divided Decanoate (every 2 weeks): IM only	
Thiothixene	15-60 mg/day, divided	
Trifluoperazine	15-50 mg/day, divided	

SECOND-GENERATION ANTIPSYCHOTICS

Second-generation antipsychotics (SGAs), also called atypical antipsychotics, block dopamine (D2) and serotonin (5-HT2A) receptors. Aripiprazole, brexpiprazole and cariprazine are D2 and 5-HT1A partial agonists, and brexpiprazole is also a 5-HT2A antagonist.

SECOND-GENERATION ANTIPSYCHOTICS (SGAs)

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Aripiprazole ***(Abilify,*** *Abilify MyCite, Abilify Maintena, Abilify Asimtufii, Aristada, Aristada Initio, Opipza)* Tablet, ODT, oral film, oral solution, IM (prefilled syringe, suspension) Also approved for irritability with autism and Tourette syndrome	10-30 mg PO QAM **Intramuscular:** *Abilify Maintena* monthly *Aristada* every 4-8 weeks, depending on dose *Abilify Asimtufii* every 2 months	**SIDE EFFECTS** Akathisia, activating or sedating, headache, anxiety, constipation Lower risk of weight gain, EPS (in children) **NOTES** *Aristada Initio:* can be administered as a one-time IM loading dose (along with one dose of oral aripiprazole) when starting or restarting *Aristada* to eliminate need for prolonged oral overlap *Abilify MyCite:* aripiprazole tablets (embedded with an ingestible sensor), along with a wearable sensor to help track drug compliance
Clozapine ***(Clozaril,*** *Versacloz* suspension) Reserved for treatment-resistant schizophrenia (i.e., resistance to ≥ 2 other antipsychotics) or significant ADRs from other treatments	300-900 mg/day, divided (start at 12.5 mg and titrate; titrate off since abrupt discontinuation can cause seizures)	**BOXED WARNINGS** Significant risk of potentially life-threatening neutropenia/agranulocytosis Bradycardia, orthostatic hypotension, syncope and cardiac arrest; risk is highest during the initial titration period, especially with rapid dose increases Myocarditis and cardiomyopathy; discontinue if suspected Seizures, dose related; use with caution in patients at seizure risk (e.g., seizure history, head trauma, alcoholism, taking medications which lower seizure threshold) **SIDE EFFECTS** Agranulocytosis, seizures, constipation, somnolence, hypotension, metabolic syndrome (↑ weight, BG, lipids), QT prolongation sialorrhea (↑ salivation) **MONITORING** To start treatment, baseline ANC must be ≥ 1,500/mm^3 Check ANC weekly × 6 months, then every 2 weeks × 6 months, then monthly; stop therapy if ANC < 1,000/mm^3 The clozapine REMS program for prescribers and pharmacies is no longer required **NOTES** Smoking reduces drug levels Titrate slowly to ↓ risk of seizures and cardiovascular effects
Lurasidone ***(Latuda)***	40-160 mg/day, divided Take with food ≥ 350 kcal	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Use with strong CYP450 3A4 inducers and inhibitors **SIDE EFFECTS** Somnolence, EPS (dystonia), nausea, ↓ risk of metabolic syndrome compared to other SGAs

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Olanzapine ***(Zyprexa,*** *Zyprexa Zydis ODT, Zyprexa Relprevv* injection) + fluoxetine *(Symbyax)* for treatment-resistant depression + samidorphan *(Lybalvi)* for treatment of schizophrenia and bipolar disorder	10-20 mg QHS IM injection (acute agitation) *Relprevv* injection suspension lasts 2-4 weeks; restricted use	**BOXED WARNING** *Zyprexa Relprevv:* sedation (including coma) and delirium (including agitation, anxiety, confusion, disorientation) following injection; must be administered in a registered healthcare facility and patients are monitored for 3 hours post-injection *(Zyprexa Relprevv* REMS program requirements) **SIDE EFFECTS** Somnolence, metabolic syndrome (↑ weight, ↑ BG, ↑ lipids), orthostasis, QT prolongation **NOTES** Smoking reduces drug levels *Lybalvi:* samidorphan is an opioid receptor antagonist that may help mitigate weight gain from olanzapine; use is contraindicated in anyone taking opioids or undergoing acute opioid withdrawal
Paliperidone ***(Invega,*** *Invega Sustenna, Invega Trinza, Invega Hafyera, Erzofri)* Tablet, IM (prefilled syringe, suspension) Active metabolite of risperidone; SEs similar	PO: 3-12 mg daily CrCl < 10 mL/min: not recommended **Intramuscular:** CrCl < 50 mL/min: not recommended *Invega Sustenna, Erzofri* monthly *Invega* ***Trinza*** every **3** months *Invega* ***Hafyer****a* every **6** months	**SIDE EFFECTS** ↑ prolactin – sexual dysfunction, galactorrhea, oligomenorrhea/amenorrhea EPS, especially at higher doses Tachycardia, QT prolongation Metabolic syndrome (↑ weight, ↑ BG, ↑ lipids) Somnolence **NOTES** *Invega* can leave a ghost tablet (empty shell) in the stool Adequate treatment with IM paliperidone (monthly or every 3 months) must be established before starting *Invega Trinza* or *Hafyera* OROS delivery enables once daily dosing – do not break or crush
Quetiapine ***(Seroquel,*** *Seroquel XR)*	400-800 mg/day, divided BID or XR QHS	**SIDE EFFECTS** Somnolence, metabolic syndrome (↑ weight, ↑ BG, ↑ lipids), orthostasis, possible ocular effects (cataracts), QT prolongation Low EPS risk – often used for psychosis in Parkinson disease **NOTES** Take XR at night, without food or with a light meal (≤ 300 kcal)
Risperidone ***(Risperdal,*** *Risperdal Consta, Rykindo, Perseris, Uzedy)* Tablet, ODT, oral solution, SC (prefilled syringe), IM (suspension) Also approved for irritability associated with autism	2-16 mg/day, divided **Intramuscular:** *Risperdal Consta and Rykindo,* 25-50 mg every 2 weeks **Subcutaneous:** *Perseris* monthly *Uzedy* every 1-2 months	**SIDE EFFECTS** ↑ prolactin – sexual dysfunction, galactorrhea, irregular/missed periods EPS, especially at higher doses Tachycardia, QT prolongation Metabolic syndrome (↑ weight, ↑ BG, ↑ lipids) Somnolence
Ziprasidone ***(Geodon)***	40-160 mg/day, divided BID Take with food Acute: *Geodon* IM 10 mg Q2H or 20 mg Q4H Max: 40 mg/day IM	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** QT prolongation; do not use with QT risk **SIDE EFFECTS** Somnolence, EPS, dizziness, nausea

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Asenapine *(Saphris, Secuado)* *Saphris:* sublingual tablet *Secuado:* patch	10-20 mg/day, divided BID No food/drink for 10 min after dose *Secuado:* 3.8-7.6 mg applied daily	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Severe hepatic impairment **SIDE EFFECTS** Somnolence, tongue numbness (SL tablet), EPS, QT prolongation
Cariprazine *(Vraylar)*	1.5-6 mg daily	**SIDE EFFECTS** EPS, dystonia, headache, insomnia
Brexpiprazole *(Rexulti)*	2-4 mg daily	**SIDE EFFECTS** Weight gain, dyspepsia, diarrhea, akathisia
Iloperidone *(Fanapt)*	12-24 mg/day, divided Titrate slowly due to orthostasis	**SIDE EFFECTS** Dizziness, somnolence, orthostasis, tachycardia, QT prolongation
Lumateperone *(Caplyta)*	42 mg daily	**SIDE EFFECTS** Somnolence, EPS

SELECTING AN ANTIPSYCHOTIC

Antipsychotics are chosen based on several considerations, including past medication use and side effects. SGAs have variable degrees of metabolic side effects, including weight gain, increased blood glucose (BG), increased cholesterol, and increased triglycerides. Drugs with higher metabolic risk should be monitored during treatment and avoided if diabetes or cardiovascular disease is present. Although at a lower incidence than FGAs, some of the SGAs can cause dose-related EPS. Prolactin levels can increase, causing gynecomastia (painful, swollen breast tissue), galactorrhea, sexual dysfunction and oligomenorrhea/amenorrhea. Clozapine has the highest efficacy, but has multiple boxed warnings (e.g., agranulocytosis, seizures, myocarditis). The Study Tip Gal (Treatment Considerations) lists the drugs most likely to cause major adverse effects; avoid using them in an at-risk patient.

TREATMENT CONSIDERATIONS

When assessing treatment resistance or evaluating the best option for a partial response, evaluate whether the patient has had an adequate trial (at least 6 weeks) of an antipsychotic, including whether the dose is adequate and whether the patient has been taking the medication as prescribed.

Did it work and was it well-tolerated?
If the drug was taken at a reasonable dose and for an adequate trial period and did not work well, do not use it again.

Do not choose a treatment that was poorly tolerated in the past (e.g., painful dystonia or tardive dyskinesia with haloperidol, painful gynecomastia with paliperidone/risperidone).

Cardiac risk/QT prolongation risk
Do not choose drugs with high risk like ziprasidone, haloperidol, thioridazine or chlorpromazine.

History of movement disorder (e.g., Parkinson disease)
Do not choose a drug with high risk of EPS [e.g., FGAs, risperidone, paliperidone (at higher doses)].
Quetiapine is preferred.

Overweight/metabolic risk (e.g., ↑ TG)
Do not choose a drug that worsens metabolic issues like clozapine or olanzapine; consider initiation of metformin if these drugs must be used. Metabolic risk is lower with aripiprazole, ziprasidone, lurasidone and asenapine.

Nonadherence or unhoused patients
Choose a long-acting injection (see algorithm on next page).

FORMULATION CONSIDERATIONS

STAT!
Acute psychosis
(and refusing PO meds)

→ Haloperidol or olanzapine (IV/IM) +/- diphenydramine and lorazepam

Alternative: ziprasidone IM

Chronic treatment:
adherent to daily
PO treatment

→ FGA or SGA oral tablets or other formulations

Chronic treatment:
not adherent to daily
PO treatment or swallowing difficulties

→ Long-acting injectable IM or SC
Dosing intervals below

IM: paliperidone *(Invega Hafyera)*	6 months
IM: paliperidone *(Invega Trinza)*	3 months
IM: aripiprazole *(Abilify Asimtufii)*	2 months
IM: aripiprazole *(Aristada)* SC: risperidone *(Uzedy)*	1-2 months
IM: aripiprazole *(Abilify Maintena)*, haloperidol *(Haldol Decanoate)*, paliperidone *(Invega Sustenna, Erzofri)* SC: risperidone *(Perseris)*	Monthly
IM: olanzapine *(Relprevv)*	2-4 weeks
IM: fluphenazine decanoate, risperidone *(Risperdal Consta, Rykindo)*	2 weeks

Failure with 2 or more antipsychotics:
Clozapine *(Clozaril)* tablet
Versacloz suspension

→ ODT (not adherent/dysphagia)*
Aripiprazole *(Abilify)* ODT
Olanzapine *(Zyprexa Zydis)* ODT
Risperidone ODT

Sublingual
Asenapine *(Saphris)*

Oral liquids
Aripiprazole *(Abilify)*
Fluphenazine
Haloperidol
Risperidone *(Risperdal)*

Patch
Asenapine *(Secuado)*

**Crushed immediate-release tablets are another option*

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PSYCHOSIS IN PARKINSON DISEASE

Quetiapine is often used to treat psychosis in Parkinson disease (PD) because it has a low risk of EPS. Pimavanserin is an atypical antipsychotic approved only for psychosis in PD. It is an antagonist at serotonin (5-HT2A and 5-HT2C) receptors. It does not affect dopamine receptors and does not worsen motor symptoms of PD.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Pimavanserin *(Nuplazid)*	34 mg PO daily (two 17 mg tablets)	**WARNINGS** Not approved for dementia-related psychosis. See Boxed Warnings discussion. QT prolongation; avoid use with drugs that also increase the QT interval and in patients with risk factors for prolonged QT interval **SIDE EFFECTS** Peripheral edema, confusion

ANTIPSYCHOTIC DRUG INTERACTIONS

- All antipsychotics can prolong the QT interval. Thioridazine, a FGA, is high-risk for QT prolongation (boxed warning). Use caution with other medications that increase risk.
- Smoking can ↓ plasma levels of olanzapine and clozapine; patients who smoke can require ↑ doses.
- Avoid concurrent drugs that lower the seizure threshold with clozapine.
- High plasma levels of risperidone and paliperidone can increase prolactin and cause EPS. Caution when using risperidone with CYP2D6 inhibitors, including paroxetine and fluoxetine.
- Monitor for respiratory depression and hypotension when antipsychotics are given with benzodiazepines.
- Caution with other dopamine blocking drugs (e.g., metoclopramide), due to ↑ EPS and TD risk.

KEY COUNSELING POINTS

See the Drug Formulations and Patient Counseling chapter for counseling language/layman's terminology.

ALL ANTIPSYCHOTICS

- MedGuide required.
- Can cause:
  - ☐ Drowsiness.
  - ☐ Orthostasis.
  - ☐ Unusual body movements. Symptoms include shakiness, stiffness, or uncontrollable movements of the mouth, tongue, cheeks, jaw, arms or legs. Contact your healthcare provider immediately.
  - ☐ Fever, sweating, severe muscle stiffness (rigidity) and confusion. Contact your healthcare provider immediately.

CLOZAPINE, OLANZAPINE, RISPERIDONE, PALIPERIDONE AND QUETIAPINE

- Can cause hyperglycemia and weight gain.

CLOZAPINE

- Can cause low white blood cell count.

RISPERIDONE

- Risperidone oral solution: administer directly from the calibrated pipette, or mix with water, coffee, orange juice or low-fat milk; it cannot be mixed with cola or tea.

ASENAPINE SUBLINGUAL

- Can cause tongue numbness.

TARDIVE DYSKINESIA

Tardive dyskinesia (TD) is a complication that can occur with dopamine blockade, as with antipsychotics. TD can cause irreversible symptoms that include uncontrollable movements in the tongue, face, trunk and extremities and can interfere with walking, talking and breathing. Valbenazine and deutetrabenazine reversibly inhibit vesicular monoamine transporter 2 (VMAT2), a transporter that regulates monoamine uptake from the cytoplasm. Both drugs are approved for the treatment of TD and chorea associated with Huntington's disease.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Valbenazine *(Ingrezza)*	Start 40 mg PO daily, increase in 1 week to 80 mg PO daily; maintenance dose of 60-80 mg daily Moderate-severe hepatic impairment: adjustment required CYP2D6 poor metabolizer: consider dose reduction	**WARNINGS** Somnolence, QT prolongation (avoid in long QT syndrome)
Deutetrabenazine *(Austedo, Austedo XR)*	Start 6 mg PO BID, increase weekly based on response (max 48 mg/day) Concurrent strong CYP2D6 inhibitors or CYP2D6 poor metabolizer: max dose 36 mg/day	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Hepatic impairment, administration with tetrabenazine or valbenazine, administration with an MAO inhibitor (within 14 days) **WARNINGS** Somnolence, QT prolongation (avoid in long QT syndrome)

DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Valbenazine and deutetrabenazine are substrates of CYP3A4 and 2D6. Dose reduction is required when given with strong inhibitors of CYP3A4 (e.g., clarithromycin) or 2D6 (e.g., paroxetine, fluoxetine).
- Avoid use with MAO inhibitors.
- Valbenazine is a P-gp inhibitor and can ↑ digoxin concentrations. Dosage adjustment of digoxin may be required.

NEUROLEPTIC MALIGNANT SYNDROME

Antipsychotics used to be called neuroleptics. Neuroleptic malignant syndrome (NMS) is rare but is highly lethal. It occurs most commonly with the FGAs and is due to D2 blockade. NMS is less common with SGAs and with other dopamine blocking drugs, including metoclopramide. The majority of cases occur within two weeks of starting treatment or immediately following high doses of injectables given alongside multiple oral doses. Occasionally, patients develop NMS after years of antipsychotic use. NMS is a medical emergency. Intense muscle contractions can lead to acute renal injury (due to rhabdomyolysis from the destruction of muscle tissue), suffocation and death.

SIGNS

- Hyperthermia (high fever, with profuse sweating)
- Extreme muscle rigidity (called "lead pipe" rigidity), which can lead to respiratory failure
- Mental status changes
- Tachycardia, tachypnea and blood pressure changes

LABORATORY RESULTS

- ↑ creatine phosphokinase and ↑ white blood cells

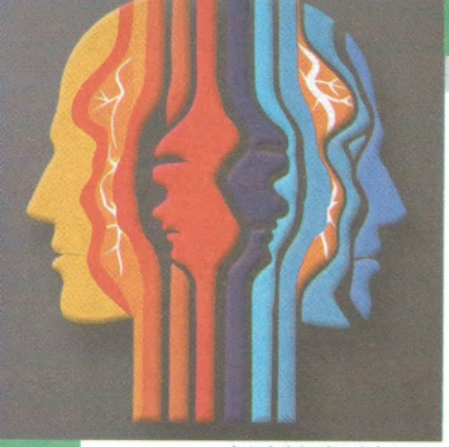
TREATMENT

- Stop the antipsychotic and provide supportive care: cardiorespiratory and hemodynamic support and manage electrolytes
- Control the patient's temperature: cooling bed, antipyretics, cooled IV fluids
- Relax the muscles: benzodiazepines, dantrolene *(Ryanodex, Dantrium, Revonto)* or some cases may require a dopamine agonist (e.g., bromocriptine)
- After resolution of the symptoms, consider a different antipsychotic (e.g., quetiapine, clozapine)

Select Guidelines/References

Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition, Text Revision (DSM-5-TR).

The American Psychiatric Association Practice Guideline for the Treatment of Patients with Schizophrenia. Third Ed. American Psychiatric Association; 2021 (accessed 2025 Feb 24).



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CHAPTER 64

BIPOLAR DISORDER

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BIPOLAR CLASSIFICATIONS

BIPOLAR I
At least one episode of mania, and usually, bouts of intense depression (a depressive episode is not required for diagnosis).

BIPOLAR II
At least one episode of hypomania (lasting ≥ 4 consecutive days) and at least one depressive episode (lasting ≥ 2 weeks).

= Study Tip Gal

BACKGROUND

Bipolar disorder is characterized by fluctuations in mood from an extremely sad or hopeless state (called bipolar depression) to an abnormally elevated, overexcited or irritable mood called mania or hypomania. Mania is associated with significant impairment in social/work functioning, psychosis (a loss of contact with reality, including hallucinations or delusions) or hospitalization. Hypomania is a milder form of mania that does not affect social/work functioning, cause psychosis or require hospitalization.

Each mood episode represents a drastic change from an individual's usual mood and behavior. Some episodes include symptoms of both mania and depression, which is called a mixed state. Individuals may seek help during a depressive episode, which can lead to a misdiagnosis of depression only.

Bipolar disorder is classified as bipolar I or bipolar II, which differ by the severity of mania (see box to the left). Cyclothymia is a related disorder consisting of hypomanic and depressive symptoms without meeting criteria for a major depressive, manic or hypomanic episode. Bipolar disorder can reduce quality of life or cause problems with relationships and employment. It can lead to drug abuse, anxiety disorders and suicide.

DIAGNOSTIC CRITERIA

Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5) criteria are used to diagnose bipolar disorders. A toxicology screen should be done prior to starting treatment to rule out drug-induced mania.

WHAT IS MANIA?

Symptoms

- Inflated self-esteem
- Needs less sleep
- More talkative than normal
- Jumping from topic to topic
- Easily distracted
- Increase in goal-directed activity
- High-risk, pleasurable activities (e.g., buying sprees, sexual indiscretions, gambling)

Definition

Abnormally elevated or irritable mood for at least a week (or any duration if hospitalization is needed)

Diagnosis

Exhibits ≥ 3 symptoms or, if mood is only irritable, exhibits ≥ 4 symptoms

DRUG TREATMENT

Patients with bipolar disorder can cycle between mania and depression. The goal of treatment is to stabilize the mood without inducing a depressive or manic state. Traditional mood stabilizers, such as lithium and antiseizure drugs (valproate, lamotrigine and carbamazepine), treat both mania and depression without inducing either state. Antipsychotics can stabilize the mood when mania occurs with psychosis. Antidepressants can induce or exacerbate a manic episode when used as monotherapy, so they should only be used in combination with a mood stabilizer.

To select treatment, consider the following:

- The side effect profile of the drug.
- The patient's medication history and first-degree relatives' medication history; if the patient or a family member responded well to a drug, the same drug might be a reasonable option.
- The drug formulations available and cost.

ACUTE TREATMENT

Acute treatment will depend on the type of episode (mania vs. depression).

- Manic episode: first-line treatment is an antipsychotic (e.g., olanzapine), lithium or valproate. A combination of an antipsychotic + lithium or valproate is preferred for severe episodes.
- Depressive episode: first-line treatment is an antipsychotic (e.g., quetiapine). Lithium, valproate or lamotrigine can be added or used as alternatives.

MAINTENANCE

Medications that were effective for acute episodes should be continued as maintenance treatment to prevent relapse. These include lithium, antiseizure drugs and second-generation antipsychotics (SGAs). Combination treatment might be more effective than monotherapy at preventing relapse.

MedGuides are required with all antidepressants (primarily due to suicide risk) and antipsychotics (due to increased risk of death in elderly patients with dementia-related psychosis).

ANTISEIZURE DRUGS

Several anticonvulsants are used for the treatment of bipolar disorder. See the Seizures/Epilepsy chapter for a detailed review of these medications:

- **Lamotrigine:** requires a slow titration due to the risk of a severe rash. Do not use for acute mania.
- **Valproate/Valproic Acid Derivatives**
- **Carbamazepine**

SECOND-GENERATION ANTIPSYCHOTICS

Antipsychotics can be used alone or in combination with a traditional mood stabilizer. A major concern with antipsychotics is the risk of extrapyramidal symptoms (EPS). First-generation antipsychotics (e.g., haloperidol) have a higher incidence of EPS than SGAs, so SGAs are preferred. See the Schizophrenia/Psychosis chapter for a review of the SGAs. The following are common SGAs that are used alone or in combination with mood stabilizers for acute mania and/or maintenance treatment:

- **Aripiprazole**
- **Olanzapine**
- **Quetiapine**
- **Risperidone**
- **Ziprasidone**
- **Lurasidone:** can use alone or in combination with mood stabilizers for bipolar depressive episodes.
- Olanzapine/fluoxetine: can use alone for acute depressive episodes.

LITHIUM

Lithium is proposed to work by influencing the reuptake of serotonin and/or norepinephrine or by moderating glutamate levels in the brain. Glutamate is the primary excitatory neurotransmitter, so high levels could cause mania.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Lithium *(Lithobid)* Tablet, capsule, syrup	Start: 300-900 mg/day, divided BID-TID Usual range: 900-1,800 mg/day, divided BID-TID Extended-release: take BID Titrate slowly, as tolerated Take with or after meals to reduce nausea **Therapeutic range** 0.6-1.2 mEq/L (trough level) Acute mania may require up to 1.5 mEq/L initially	**BOXED WARNING** Serum lithium levels should be monitored to avoid toxicity **WARNINGS** Renal impairment, hyponatremia and dehydration (↑ lithium toxicity) Serotonin syndrome (see Drug Interactions) **SIDE EFFECTS** **Within therapeutic range:** GI upset (nausea/diarrhea), cognitive effects, cogwheel rigidity, fine hand tremor, thirst, polyuria/polydipsia, weight gain, hypothyroidism, hypercalcemia, cardiac abnormalities, edema, anorexia, worsening psoriasis, blue-gray skin pigmentation, impotence **Toxicity:** > 1.5 mEq/L: ataxia, coarse hand tremor, vomiting, diarrhea, sedation > 2.5 mEq/L: CNS depression, arrhythmia, seizure, coma **MONITORING** Serum lithium levels, renal function, thyroid function (TSH, FT4), electrolytes (calcium, potassium, sodium) **NOTES** Renally cleared; no CYP450 interactions Avoid in pregnancy, breastfeeding; cardiac malformation in 1st trimester

LITHIUM DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Lithium levels ↑ with:
  - ☐ ↓ salt intake, sodium loss (e.g., with ACE inhibitors, ARBs, thiazide diuretics)
  - ☐ NSAIDs: aspirin and sulindac are safer options
- Lithium levels ↓ with ↑ salt intake, caffeine or theophylline
- ↑ risk of serotonin syndrome if lithium is taken with SSRIs, SNRIs, triptans, linezolid or other serotonergic drugs (see Drug Interactions chapter)
- ↑ risk of neurotoxicity (e.g., ataxia, tremors, nausea) if lithium is taken with verapamil, diltiazem, phenytoin or carbamazepine

CONVERTING BETWEEN LITHIUM FORMULATIONS

5 mL lithium citrate syrup = 8 mEq of lithium ion

8 mEq of lithium ion = 300 mg lithium carbonate tabs/caps

CASE SCENARIO

A patient is taking 450 mg lithium carbonate BID, but reports difficulty swallowing the capsules. How many milliliters of lithium citrate syrup should be given for each dose? (Round to the nearest TENTH.)

Determine how many milliequivalents of lithium are required for each dose.

$$\frac{\text{300 mg lithium carbonate}}{\text{8 mEq lithium ion}} = \frac{\text{450 mg lithium carbonate}}{\text{X mEq lithium ion}}$$

X = 12 mEq lithium ion

Next determine how many milliliters of lithium citrate syrup are required.

$$\frac{\text{12 mEq}}{\text{X mL}} = \frac{\text{8 mEq}}{\text{5 mL}}$$

7.5 mL of lithium citrate syrup per dose

This problem can also be solved using the milliequivalent formula. Refer to the Calculations II chapter for additional examples.

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PREGNANCY

The common mood stabilizers have known teratogenic effects. Avoid in pregnancy, if possible.

- Valproate can cause neural tube defects, fetal valproate syndrome and cognitive effects.
- Carbamazepine can cause fetal carbamazepine syndrome, which can result in facial abnormalities and other significant issues.
- Lithium can cause congenital cardiac abnormalities.

Lamotrigine or SGAs are safer choices than valproate, carbamazepine or lithium. Lurasidone has the most favorable safety profile in pregnancy, but its use is limited since it is only approved for bipolar depression.

KEY COUNSELING POINTS

See the Drug Formulations and Patient Counseling chapter for counseling language/layman's terminology.

LITHIUM

- Take with food or at end of meal to reduce nausea.
- Maintain consistent salt intake. Changes in salt intake can alter lithium levels in the body.
- Maintain hydration with non-caffeinated fluids. Dehydration due to excessive sweating, diarrhea, vomiting, or prolonged sun exposure can ↑ lithium levels and side effects.
- Avoid in pregnancy/breastfeeding.
- Notify healthcare provider immediately for worsening nausea or diarrhea, slurred speech or confusion.
- Can impair alertness, use caution while driving or during other tasks requiring you to be alert.

Select Guidelines/References

Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition, Text Revision (DSM-5-TR). Arlington VA, American Psychiatric Association, 2022.

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CHAPTER 65

ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER (ADHD)

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= Study Tip Gal

BACKGROUND

ADHD is the most common neurodevelopmental disorder in children, with a higher prevalence in males compared to females. It is a chronic illness that can continue to cause symptoms throughout adolescence and adulthood.

ADHD is characterized by symptoms of inattention, hyperactivity and impulsivity. Patients often have difficulty focusing, are easily distracted, have trouble staying still and are frequently unable to control impulsive behavior. The primary presenting symptoms can vary; some individuals are more inattentive, and others are more impulsive. With increasing age, inattention and impulsivity can remain, and hyperactivity can decrease.

The pathogenesis of ADHD is not well defined, but an imbalance of catecholamine metabolism, with subsequent decreased dopaminergic activity, is thought to play a role. Stimulant medications (e.g., methylphenidate, amphetamine) are the primary treatment for ADHD, because they raise dopamine and norepinephrine levels.

Treatment of ADHD includes both medication and behavioral therapy. The decision to medicate is weighed against the risks, especially in young children. A child with untreated ADHD can have impaired academic standing, poor social skills and risky behavior, but medications have side effects. For this reason, first line treatment for children age 4 – 5 years is parent training in behavior management and/or behavioral classroom intervention. Methylphenidate can be considered if moderate-severe symptoms persist despite behavioral interventions. In patients age ≥ 6 years, ADHD medications are first line and should be used with behavioral interventions if available.

DIAGNOSTIC CRITERIA

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) provides diagnostic criteria for ADHD which are based on the primary symptoms, inattention and/or hyperactivity and impulsivity, as described below.

INATTENTION

≥ 6 symptoms of inattention for children up to age 16 (≥ 5 symptoms for age ≥ 17 years); symptoms must be present for at least 6 months and are inappropriate for the developmental level.

Symptoms:
Fails to pay attention, has trouble holding attention, does not pay attention when someone is talking, does not follow through on instructions, fails to finish schoolwork, has difficulty organizing tasks, avoids or dislikes tasks which require mental effort, loses things, is easily distracted, is forgetful.

HYPERACTIVITY & IMPULSIVITY

≥ 6 symptoms of hyperactivity-impulsivity for children up to age 16 (≥ 5 symptoms for age ≥ 17 years); symptoms must be present for at least 6 months and are inappropriate for the developmental level.

Symptoms:
Often fidgets or squirms, leaves seat unexpectedly, runs about when not appropriate, is unable to play quietly, is "on the go" as if "driven by a motor," talks excessively, blurts out answers, has trouble waiting his/her turn, interrupts or intrudes on others.

THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS MUST BE MET:

- Several inattentive or hyperactive-impulsive symptoms were present before age 12.
- Symptoms must be present in ≥ 2 settings (e.g., at home, school, work, with friends, relatives or caregivers).
- Symptoms interfere with functioning and are not caused by another disorder.

NATURAL PRODUCTS

Fish oils may modestly improve cognitive function and behavior; however, data establishing their efficacy for ADHD is limited. Melatonin may be used for sleep onset insomnia in individuals taking stimulants.

DRUG TREATMENT

Stimulants are the first-line medications for ADHD. Some stimulant medications come in formulations that are easier for children to swallow (see Study Tip Gal below) or more difficult to abuse. Long-acting formulations are preferred for children to maintain more steady symptom control and avoid the need for a dose during the day at school.

A non-stimulant medication can be tried when stimulants do not work well enough (after 2 – 3 medication trials) or the side effects are intolerable. Non-stimulants can be used first line when prescribers are concerned about the possibility of stimulant abuse or diversion by the patient or family.

Almost all ADHD medications are approved for use in adults and children age ≥ 6 years, with a few exceptions, as noted in the drug tables in this chapter.

PATIENT-FRIENDLY FORMULATIONS FOR STIMULANTS

Young children (and others) who cannot swallow capsules or tablets can use long-acting formulations or capsules that can be opened, such as those below.

When putting capsule contents in food, use a small amount of food (do not warm the food). Eat the food right away, without chewing.

- Capsules that can be opened
  - Many long-acting capsules (e.g., *Adderall XR, Ritalin LA)* can be opened and the contents sprinkled on a small amount of applesauce
  - *Vyvanse* capsule contents can be mixed in water, orange juice or yogurt
- Chewable tablets (e.g., *Vyvanse)*
- Orally-disintegrating tablets
- Patches (e.g., *Daytrana)*
- Suspensions

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TREATMENT OF ADHD

Stimulants are first line (take in AM)
Methylphenidate* (e.g., *Concerta, Daytrana, Ritalin)*

Lisdexamfetamine *(Vyvanse)*

Dextroamphetamine/Amphetamine *(Adderall, Adderall XR)*

Non-stimulants are second line
Atomoxetine *(Strattera)*
Viloxazine *(Qelbree)*

Add-on medications (or can be used alone)
Guanfacine ER *(Intuniv)*
Clonidine ER

To help sleep at night
Clonidine IR
Diphenhydramine
Melatonin

**Jornay PM is taken in the evening.*

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STIMULANT SAFETY CONCERNS

All stimulants are C-II medications and must be dispensed with a MedGuide. The boxed warnings, contraindications and warnings discussed here are common to most stimulants and are not repeated in the drug tables that follow. Additional safety issues unique to specific products are noted in the drug tables.

BOXED WARNING: ABUSE, MISUSE AND ADDICTION

Stimulant medications have a high potential for abuse and dependence, which can contribute to the development of substance use disorder and addiction. The misuse of stimulants, especially unapproved administration methods (e.g., snorting, injecting), can lead to overdose and death. Risk for abuse (e.g., history of alcohol or substance use disorder) should be assessed prior to prescribing, and symptoms of misuse (e.g., dilated pupils, increased heart rate and blood pressure, sweating, tremor, anxiety) should be monitored during treatment.

CONTRAINDICATIONS

- Do not use within 14 days of an MAO inhibitor due to risk of hypertensive crisis when used together.

WARNINGS

- The high risk of stimulant abuse and misuse (see boxed warning) can lead to drug diversion for illicit use or distribution. Patients and caregivers should store these drugs in a safe (ideally locked) place and properly dispose of unused drug.
- Increased levels of dopamine and norepinephrine can increase heart rate and blood pressure. This can cause serious cardiovascular events in children and adults with or without preexisting cardiac disease. Assess for cardiac disease at baseline and avoid stimulants if cardiac abnormalities are present, due to an increased risk of sudden death.
- Vascular problems (e.g., priapism, Raynaud's disease) can occur and require a ↓ dose.
- New-onset psychosis or mania, or an exacerbation of preexisting psychosis can occur. Use caution in patients with a preexisting psychiatric condition.
- A loss of appetite is common. This is especially concerning in children, as it can contribute to a decrease in the child's growth trajectory.
- The risk of serotonin syndrome is increased when stimulants are used in combination with other serotonergic drugs (e.g., SSRIs, SNRIs, TCAs, buspirone). Refer to the Drug Interactions chapter.
- Some stimulants can lower the seizure threshold.
- Visual disturbances (e.g., blurry vision, difficulty with accommodation) can occur.

STIMULANTS

Stimulants block the reuptake of norepinephrine and dopamine; they are highly effective for ADHD and are recommended first line. Most stimulants are dosed every morning (IR products and some others can be given in divided doses) with doses titrated up every seven days, as needed, to reduce adverse effects. Stimulants do not need to be tapered off when used as directed (i.e., not abused).

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Methylphenidate		
IR tablet: ***Ritalin*** IR oral solution: *Methylin* IR chewable tablet ER tablet	Start 5 mg BID, 30 min before breakfast and lunch Max: 60 mg/day	See Stimulant Safety Concerns **WARNINGS** *Daytrana:* loss of skin pigmentation at and distant from application site (resembles vitiligo); contact dermatitis with local reactions (e.g., edema, papules) *Concerta, Relexxii:* do not use if GI narrowing condition (e.g., motility issues, small bowel disease) **SIDE EFFECTS** Insomnia, ↓ appetite/weight, HA, irritability, N/V, dry mouth, blurry vision **MONITORING** Consider ECG prior to treatment; monitor BP, HR, cardiac symptoms, CNS effects, abuse potential, height and weight (children) **NOTES** OROS delivery: outer coat dissolves fast for quick action, the rest is released slowly; can see ghost tablet in stool; hard to crush to ↓ abuse potential *Jornay PM:* outer coating delays drug release 10 hrs to allow evening dosing; inner coating releases drug throughout the day *Daytrana:* apply to the hip 2 hrs before desired effect (or upon wakening so it starts to deliver prior to school); remove after 9 hrs; alternate hips daily; discard used patches by flushing down the toilet Chewable tabs: contain phenylalanine (avoid if PKU)
ER tablet with OROS delivery: ***Concerta,*** *Relexxii*	Start 18-36 mg QAM Max: 72 mg/day	
ER capsule: ***Ritalin LA,*** *Aptensio XR, Jornay PM*	*Ritalin LA:* start 10-20 mg QAM *Aptensio XR:* start 10 mg QAM Max: 60 mg/day *Jornay PM:* start 20 mg QPM Max: 100 mg/day	
ER oral suspension: *Quillivant XR*	Start 20 mg QAM	
ER chewable tablet: *QuilliChew ER*	Start 20 mg QAM Max: 60 mg/day	
ER orally-disintegrating tablet: *Cotempla XR-ODT*	Start 17.3 mg QAM for age 6-17 years Max: 51.8 mg/day	
Transdermal patch: ***Daytrana***	Start 10 mg/9 hr patch QAM Max: 30 mg/9 hr	

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Dexmethylphenidate		
Dexmethylphenidate *(Focalin, Focalin XR)* IR tablet, ER capsule	IR: start 2.5 mg BID, given at least 4 hrs apart Max: 20 mg/day ER: start 5 mg (children) or 10 mg (adults) QAM Max: 30 mg/day (children) or 40 mg/day (adults)	See Stimulant Safety Concerns **NOTES** Active isomer of methylphenidate; to convert from methylphenidate to dexmethylphenidate use one-half of the total daily dose of methylphenidate
Serdexmethylphenidate/ Dexmethylphenidate *(Azstarys)* Capsule	Start 39.2 mg/7.8 mg QAM Max: 52.3 mg/10.4 mg daily	See Stimulant Safety Concerns **NOTES** Serdexmethylphenidate: prodrug to dexmethylphenidate, provides extended duration of action following faster-acting dexmethylphenidate
Amphetamine, Dextroamphetamine and Combinations		
Dextroamphetamine/ Amphetamine		See Stimulant Safety Concerns **NOTES** IR products approved for children ≥ 3 years of age (except *Evekeo ODT)* AAP guidelines do not recommend dextroamphetamine in children ≤ 5 years of age ER formulations cannot be substituted for other amphetamine products on a mg-per-mg basis; follow dosing schedule provided by manufacturer *Dyanavel XR:* shake suspension prior to use Do not take with acidic foods (e.g., juice, vitamin C) which ↓ absorption
IR tablet: ***Adderall***	Start 5 mg QAM or BID, with 2nd dose 4-6 hrs after 1st dose Max: 40 mg/day	
ER capsule: ***Adderall XR,*** *Mydayis*	Start 5-10 mg (6-12 yrs), 10 mg (13-17 yrs) or 10-20 mg (adults) QAM Max: 30 mg/day (children) or 60 mg/day (adults)	
Amphetamine ER orally-disintegrating tablet: *Adzenys XR-ODT*	Start 6.3 mg (children) or 12.5 mg (adults) QAM Max: varies based on age	
ER tablet (can be chewed): *Dyanavel XR* ER oral suspension: *Dyanavel XR*	Start 2.5-5 mg QAM Max: 20 mg/day	
IR tablet: *Evekeo* IR orally-disintegrating tablet: *Evekeo ODT**	Start 5 mg QAM or BID, with 2nd dose 4-6 hrs after 1st dose (6-17 yrs) Max: 40 mg/day	
Dextroamphetamine ER capsule: *Dexedrine* IR oral solution: *ProCentra* IR tablet: *Zenzedi* ER patch: *Xelstrym*	PO: start 5 mg QAM or BID, with 2nd dose 4-6 hrs after 1st dose Max: 40 mg/day	
Lisdexamfetamine (prodrug of dextroamphetamine)		
Lisdexamfetamine *(Vyvanse)* Capsule, chewable tablet	Start 20-30 mg (children) or 30 mg (adults) QAM Max: 70 mg/day	See Stimulant Safety Concerns **NOTES** Low abuse potential; prodrug composed of l-lysine (amino acid) bonded to dextroamphetamine; it is hydrolyzed in the blood to active dextroamphetamine; if injected or snorted, the fast effect (rush) is muted

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Methamphetamine		
Methamphetamine *(Desoxyn)* Tablet	Start 5 mg QAM or BID Max: 20-25 mg daily	See Stimulant Safety Concerns

**Brand discontinued but name still used in practice.*

NON-STIMULANTS

These medications are used second line if trials of stimulant medications fail or side effects are intolerable. They can be used first line if the prescriber is concerned about stimulant abuse or diversion potential. Non-stimulant medications are not controlled and therefore do not have the same potential for abuse and dependence as stimulants).

Clonidine ER and guanfacine ER are antihypertensive drugs that are also marketed in longer-acting formulations for ADHD. They can be used alone or in combination with stimulant medications.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Selective Norepinephrine Reuptake Inhibitors		
Atomoxetine *(Strattera)* Capsule	> 70 kg: start 40 mg daily ≤ 70 kg: start 0.5 mg/kg/day Max: 100 mg/day Can take in divided doses if needed (morning and late afternoon/early evening) Concurrent use of strong CYP2D6 inhibitors (e.g., paroxetine): max dose is 80 mg daily	**BOXED WARNINGS** Risk of suicidal ideation; monitor for suicidal thinking or behavior, worsening mood, or unusual behavior **CONTRAINDICATIONS** MAO inhibitor use within the past 14 days Atomoxetine: glaucoma, pheochromocytoma, severe cardiovascular disorders Viloxazine: concurrent use of major CYP1A2 substrates or substrates with a narrow therapeutic index **WARNINGS** Cardiovascular events, psychosis/mania: assess at baseline and as needed during treatment Atomoxetine: aggressive behavior, hepatotoxicity, priapism, urinary hesitancy and retention, growth delays **SIDE EFFECTS** ↓ appetite, insomnia, somnolence, dry mouth, ↑ BP, ↑ HR, headache, nausea, abdominal pain **MONITORING** BP, HR, ECG, mood, weight **NOTES** Atomoxetine: do not open the capsule – ocular irritant Viloxazine: capsule can be opened and contents sprinkled on 1 tsp of pudding or applesauce, which must be swallowed without chewing
Viloxazine *(Qelbree)* Capsule	Start 100 mg daily (children < 12 years) or 200 mg daily (children ≥ 12 years and adults) Max: 400 mg/day (children < 18 years) or 600 mg/day (adults) Dose reductions required with severe renal impairment	

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Centrally-Acting Alpha-2 Adrenergic Receptor Agonists		
Clonidine ER ER tablet: ***Kapvay**** ER oral suspension: *Onyda XR* Clonidine IR, clonidine ER *(Nexiclon XR)*, clonidine patch – for hypertension	ER tablet: Start 0.1 mg QHS, ↑ by 0.1 mg weekly and take BID (if uneven dosing, take the higher dose QHS) Max: 0.4 mg/day	**WARNINGS** Dose-dependent cardiovascular effects (bradycardia, hypotension, orthostasis, syncope), sedation and drowsiness Do not discontinue abruptly (can cause rebound hypertension) Guanfacine: skin rash (rare, discontinue if occurs); dose adjustments required with CYP3A4 inducers and inhibitors (see Drug Interactions) **SIDE EFFECTS** Dry mouth, somnolence, fatigue, dizziness, constipation, ↓ HR, hypotension, headache, nausea, abdominal pain **MONITORING** BP, HR **NOTES** Must be tapered off to ↓ risk of rebound HTN: ↓ dose (≤ 0.1 mg/day for clonidine, ≤ 1 mg/day for guanfacine) every 3-7 days Do not substitute IR clonidine or guanfacine for ER formulations
Guanfacine ER *(Intuniv)* Tablet Guanfacine IR – for hypertension	Start 1 mg daily, ↑ by ≤ 1 mg weekly Max: varies based on age Do not take with high-fat meal (↑ absorption)	

**Brand discontinued but name still used in practice.*

ATOMOXETINE DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Atomoxetine is a CYP2D6 substrate; CYP2D6 inducers or inhibitors can necessitate a change in atomoxetine dose.

VILOXAZINE DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Viloxazine is a strong CYP1A2 inhibitor and a weak CYP2D6 and CYP3A4 inhibitor. Significant drug interactions can occur.

CLONIDINE AND GUANFACINE DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Additive sedation can occur when used in combination with other CNS depressants.
- Use caution with other drugs that decrease blood pressure and heart rate (e.g., beta-blockers, non-DHP CCBs).
- Guanfacine:
  - Double the dose if used with strong CYP3A4 inducers.
  - Decrease the dose by 50% if used with strong CYP3A4 inhibitors.

KEY COUNSELING POINTS

See the Drug Formulations and Patient Counseling chapter for counseling language/layman's terminology and formulation-specific administration instructions.

STIMULANTS

- MedGuide required.
- Can cause abuse, misuse and addiction.
- Can cause:
  - ☐ Increased heart rate and blood pressure
  - ☐ Serious cardiovascular events
  - ☐ Insomnia
  - ☐ Psychosis
  - ☐ Priapism
- Decreased appetite: eat a larger breakfast to prevent weight loss; check height and weight regularly in children.
- Ghost tablet in stool *(Concerta)*.
- Some formulations contain phenylalanine. Do not use if you have phenylketonuria (PKU).

ATOMOXETINE AND VILOXAZINE

- MedGuide required.
- Can cause:
  - ☐ Suicidal ideation
  - ☐ Increased blood pressure and heart rate

CLONIDINE ER AND GUANFACINE ER

- Do not discontinue abruptly.
- Can cause:
  - ☐ Decreased heart rate and blood pressure
  - ☐ Drowsiness
  - ☐ Dry mouth
  - ☐ Constipation

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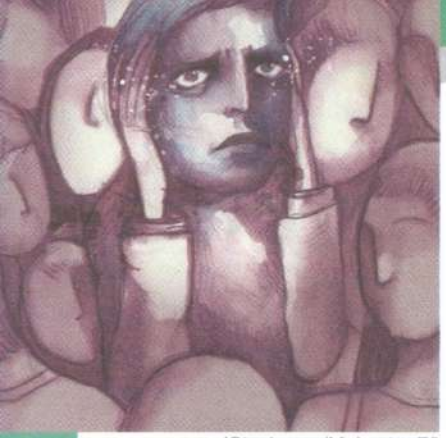

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CHAPTER 66

ANXIETY DISORDERS

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BACKGROUND

The general population can experience occasional anxiety when faced with issues at work, home or school. The symptoms of occasional anxiety (fear, worry) and any physical symptoms (tachycardia, palpitations, shortness of breath, stomach upset, chest pain or other pain, insomnia or fatigue) resolve once the issue is gone.

With an anxiety disorder, the symptoms are chronic, severe and cause great distress. The disorder can interfere with the ability to do well at school or work and can harm relationships. The major types of anxiety disorders are generalized anxiety disorder (GAD), panic disorder (PD) and social anxiety disorder (SAD). Other disorders that have symptoms of anxiety include obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). These are classified differently by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5). OCD is categorized as "obsessive-compulsive and related disorders," and PTSD is categorized under "trauma and stressor-related disorders."

NON-DRUG TREATMENT

Patients with an anxiety disorder should be assessed for comorbid conditions (e.g., hyperthyroidism) or medications that could be contributing to the problem (see Key Drugs Guy). Comorbid conditions should be treated and medications that worsen anxiety should be discontinued if possible.

Lifestyle changes can improve symptoms. Increasing physical activity, community involvement, helping others, yoga and meditation are some of the methods that can reduce stress. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is a type of mental health treatment in which a trained clinician helps the patient explore patterns of thinking that lead to problem-solving, relaxation techniques, worry exposure and more. In some cases, CBT provides adequate relief without the need for chronic medications.

SELECT DRUGS THAT CAUSE ANXIETY

Albuterol (if used too frequently or incorrectly)

Antipsychotics (e.g., aripiprazole, haloperidol)

Bupropion

Caffeine, in high doses

Decongestants (e.g., pseudoephedrine)

Illicit drugs (e.g., cocaine, LSD, methamphetamine)

Levothyroxine (if therapeutic overdose occurs)

Steroids

Stimulants (e.g., amphetamine, methylphenidate)

Theophylline

NATURAL PRODUCTS

Some natural products may provide benefit when treating anxiety, but their use is generally limited by safety issues. St. John's wort, used for depression and anxiety, is a strong CYP3A4 inducer and can decrease the concentration of other medications. St. John's wort causes photosensitivity and is serotonergic, which increases the risk of serotonin syndrome when used in combination with other serotonergic medications. Valerian is used for anxiety and sleep, but some products may be contaminated with liver toxins; if used, liver function should be monitored. Passionflower appears to be safe and is rated as "possibly effective" by the *Natural Medicines Database*. Kava is a relaxant, but it can cause severe liver damage and is not recommended.

DRUG TREATMENT

A number of medications can be used long-term to manage anxiety. Some antidepressants are FDA-approved for anxiety and other drugs are used off-label. The selection of a drug is based on both the efficacy and risk of adverse effects. The table summarizes first and second-line options to consider. Benzodiazepines (BZDs) should only be used short-term.

DRUGS USED FOR ANXIETY

DRUG/DRUG CLASS	COMMENTS
First-Line: selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) and serotonin and norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (SNRIs)	
Escitalopram *(Lexapro)* **Fluoxetine *(Prozac)*** **Paroxetine *(Paxil,* Paxil CR, Pexeva*)** **Sertraline *(Zoloft)*** **Duloxetine *(Cymbalta,* Drizalma Sprinkle)** **Venlafaxine XR *(Effexor XR)***	Most dosing will start at half the initial dose used for depression and slowly titrate to minimize anxiousness and jitteriness (common during the first couple of weeks) Will not provide immediate relief; takes at least four weeks at higher doses for a noticeable effect Other SSRIs and SNRIs may be used off-label for anxiety disorder Refer to the Depression chapter for more information on antidepressants
Second-Line	
Buspirone	Can use in combination with antidepressants (e.g., when there is a poor response) Considered a more favorable add-on medication than benzodiazepines in elderly patients (less sedating) or if there is a risk for benzodiazepine abuse Does not provide immediate relief; takes 2-4 weeks for effect
Tricyclic Antidepressants **Amitriptyline** **Nortriptyline *(Pamelor)*** Imipramine	Not FDA-approved for anxiety Risk of adverse effects (e.g., anticholinergic) limit use (see Depression chapter)
Hydroxyzine *(Vistaril)*	Sedating antihistamine with anticholinergic activity FDA-approved for anxiety but does not treat the underlying condition Should not be used long-term; use as needed, as alternative to benzodiazepines See the Common Skin Conditions chapter for more information
Pregabalin *(Lyrica,* Lyrica CR) C-V	Not approved for anxiety but has benefit in patients with anxiety & neuropathic pain Has immediate anxiolytic effects similar to benzodiazepines
Gabapentin *(Neurontin,* Gralise)	
Special Situations	
Propranolol *(Inderal LA, Inderal XL,* others)	Not FDA-approved for anxiety but can reduce symptoms of stage fright or performance anxiety (e.g., tremor, tachycardia) Dose: 10-40 mg one hour prior to an event (such as a public speech) Can cause CNS side effects (e.g., dizziness, confusion) See Hypertension chapter for more information

*Brand discontinued but name still used in practice.

BUSPIRONE

The mechanism of action of buspirone is unknown; its effect may be due to its affinity for 5-HT1A and 5-HT2 receptors.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Buspirone Tablet	Start 5-7.5 mg PO BID Can increase 5 mg/day every 2-3 days, to max dose of 30 mg PO BID Take with or without food, but be consistent	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** MAO inhibitor use within past 14 days, use with linezolid or methylene blue **WARNINGS** Risk of serotonin syndrome alone or with other serotonergic drugs **SIDE EFFECTS** Dizziness, drowsiness, headache, lightheadedness, nausea, excitement **NOTES** No potential for abuse, tolerance or physiological dependence When switching from a benzodiazepine to buspirone, the benzodiazepine must be tapered off slowly Avoid use in severe kidney or liver impairment

BUSPIRONE DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Risk of serotonin syndrome is ↑ when used in combination with other serotonergic drugs. See Drug Interactions chapter.
- Avoid grapefruit and grapefruit juice as they may ↑ buspirone levels.
- Buspirone is a major substrate of CYP3A4.
  - ☐ Decrease the dose if used with moderate or strong CYP3A4 inhibitors (e.g., erythromycin, diltiazem, verapamil, itraconazole).
  - ☐ An increase in the buspirone dose may be required with CYP3A4 inducers (e.g., rifampin).

BENZODIAZEPINES

- BZDs enhance gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA), an inhibitory neurotransmitter. This causes CNS depression, resulting in anxiolytic, anticonvulsant, sedative and/or muscle relaxant properties.
- They provide fast relief of symptoms whereas antidepressants have a longer onset of action, but they do not treat the underlying causes of anxiety.
- BZDs can be useful for short-term treatment of acute anxiety that is preventing restful sleep and disrupting life. This can be due to the recent death of a loved one, a natural disaster or another stressful situation.
- If taken long-term, patients can become addicted to BZDs and develop tolerance. Due to the risk of dependence, they should only be used for 1 – 2 weeks and then discontinued. If used for longer periods of time, they must be tapered off slowly to prevent withdrawal symptoms.
- Beers Criteria: BZDs are potentially inappropriate in adults age ≥ 65 years. BZDs have a high risk of confusion, dizziness and falls in the elderly, which is increased if used with other CNS depressants. The elderly also have a higher risk of having a "paradoxical" reaction (hyperactivity, aggression, agitation). If a BZD is used in an elderly patient, the L-O-T drugs (see Study Tip Gal) are preferred due to lower risk of adverse reactions. Lorazepam and oxazepam are indicated for anxiety; temazepam is used for insomnia.

SAFE USE OF BENZODIAZEPINES

Benzodiazepines (BZDs) are highly sedating and often not preferred due to safety concerns

Anxiety
- Most anxiety is due to depression; SSRIs and SNRIs are preferred
- If used, consider a BZD with a longer half-life and less risk of abuse (e.g., clonazepam, lorazepam)

Sleep
- First-line: non-pharmacologic treatment
- Second-line: non-BZD hypnotics, like zolpidem (fewer safety issues than BZDs)
- If used, consider temazepam

Elderly or Patients with Liver Impairment
- If used, consider BZDs that undergo glucuronidation; L-O-T drugs (Lorazepam, Oxazepam, Temazepam)

Seizures
- Injectable BZDs or diazepam rectal gel, which can be administered by a caregiver at home

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Alprazolam *(Xanax, Xanax XR, Alprazolam Intensol)* Tablet, ODT, oral solution	0.25-0.5 mg TID	**BOXED WARNING** Use with opioids can result in sedation, respiratory depression, coma and death Risk for abuse, misuse and addiction, can lead to overdose or death Continued use can lead to physical dependence; abrupt discontinuation can cause withdrawal symptoms (taper off slowly) **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Acute narrow-angle glaucoma, sleep apnea, severe respiratory insufficiency, severe liver disease (clonazepam and diazepam), myasthenia gravis (diazepam), not for use in infants age < 6 months (diazepam oral), premature infants (lorazepam parenteral products) **WARNINGS** CNS depression, anterograde amnesia, potential for abuse, safety risks in patients age ≥ 65 years (impaired cognition, delirium, falls/fractures), extravasation with IV use, paradoxical reactions, severe renal or hepatic impairment Pregnancy: crosses placenta; can cause birth defects and neonatal withdrawal syndrome **SIDE EFFECTS** Somnolence, dizziness, ataxia, weakness, lightheadedness **NOTES** C-IV Diazepam: lipophilic, fast onset, long half-life, high abuse potential Alprazolam: fast onset, often abused due to its quick action Commonly used for alcohol withdrawal syndrome: lorazepam, diazepam, chlordiazepoxide Midazolam is used in acute care (see Acute & Critical Care Medicine chapter) Antidote: flumazenil (refer to the Toxicology & Antidotes chapter)
Clonazepam *(Klonopin)* Tablet, ODT	0.25-0.5 mg BID	
Diazepam *(Valium, Diastat AcuDial, Diazepam Intensol)* Tablet, injection, oral solution, rectal gel, intranasal	2-10 mg PO BID-QID	
Lorazepam *(Ativan, Lorazepam Intensol, Loreev XR)* Tablet, injection, oral solution	2-3 mg PO daily in divided doses	
Chlordiazepoxide Capsule	5-25 mg TID-QID	
Clorazepate *(Tranxene)* Tablet	30 mg PO daily in divided doses	
Oxazepam Capsule	10-30 mg PO TID-QID	

BENZODIAZEPINE DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Additive effect with CNS depressants (e.g., alcohol, anticonvulsants, antihistamines, antipsychotics, opioids, mirtazapine, skeletal muscle relaxants, trazodone).
- Diazepam, clonazepam, chlordiazepoxide and clorazepate: use cautiously with CYP3A4 inhibitors.
- Alprazolam is contraindicated with strong CYP3A4 inhibitors (e.g., ketoconazole, itraconazole). Use caution with moderate CYP3A4 inhibitors.
- Valproate ↑ the serum concentration of lorazepam.

KEY COUNSELING POINTS

See the Drug Formulations and Patient Counseling chapter for counseling language/layman's terminology.

BUSPIRONE

- Tablets are scored to break in half or into thirds.
- Can cause:
  - ☐ Dizziness.
  - ☐ Drowsiness.
  - ☐ Nausea.

BENZODIAZEPINES

- If used regularly for > 10 days, do not stop suddenly. Taper off slowly to avoid withdrawal symptoms (e.g., anxiety, shakiness, fast heart rate, difficulty sleeping, muscle pain).
- To reduce the risk of addiction, do not take doses more frequently or for a longer period than prescribed.
- Can cause drowsiness.
- Do not use with opioid medications (can cause profound sedation, respiratory depression, coma and death).
- Do not use with alcohol (can increase risk of CNS depression).

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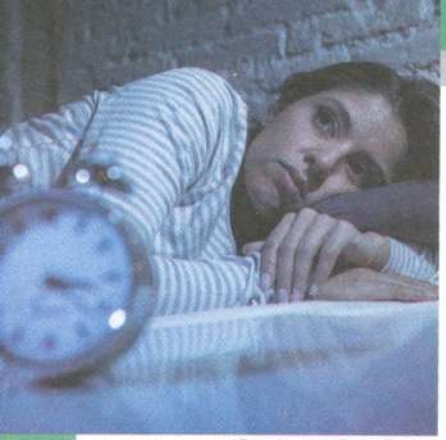

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CHAPTER 67

SLEEP DISORDERS

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= Study Tip Gal = Key Drugs Guy

BACKGROUND

There are several types of sleep disorders. This chapter discusses types managed with medications: chronic insomnia, restless legs syndrome (RLS) and narcolepsy. Another type of sleep disorder is obstructive sleep apnea, which is primarily treated with non-drug measures, including continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP).

A lack of restful sleep contributes to poor health and is linked to the development of a number of chronic conditions, including cardiovascular disease, mood disorders, alcohol use disorder and depression. Patients who chronically use OTC medications for sleep should be referred to a healthcare provider.

CHRONIC INSOMNIA

Insomnia is characterized by difficulty falling asleep (sleep initiation or sleep latency), reduced sleep duration and/or poor sleep quality (e.g., awakenings after sleep onset). A diagnosis of chronic insomnia occurs when the patient has symptoms at least three times per week for at least three months, despite adequate opportunity to sleep. This often causes daytime impairment, such as being absent from work or experiencing accidents due to fatigue, somnolence, poor memory and decreased concentration.

NON-DRUG TREATMENT

Cognitive behavioral therapy for chronic insomnia (CBT-I) is preferred and includes changes to sleep hygiene that can reduce the need for drugs (see the flow diagram on the following page).

It is important to treat underlying medical conditions that may be contributing (e.g., pain, shortness of breath due to heart failure, anxiety, bipolar disorder, depression, alcohol use disorder) and discontinue medications that can worsen insomnia (see Key Drugs Guy), if possible.

SELECT DRUGS THAT CAN WORSEN INSOMNIA

ADHD Medications
Atomoxetine
Stimulants (e.g., methylphenidate)

Psychiatric Medications
Acetylcholinesterase inhibitors (e.g., donepezil)
Aripiprazole
Bupropion
Fluoxetine (if taken late in the day)

Smoking Cessation Medications
Nicotine replacement therapy
Varenicline

Stimulants
Caffeine
Decongestants (e.g., pseudoephedrine)
Phentermine

Others: alcohol, diuretics (due to nocturia), steroids, integrase strand transfer inhibitors (INSTIs)

NATURAL PRODUCTS

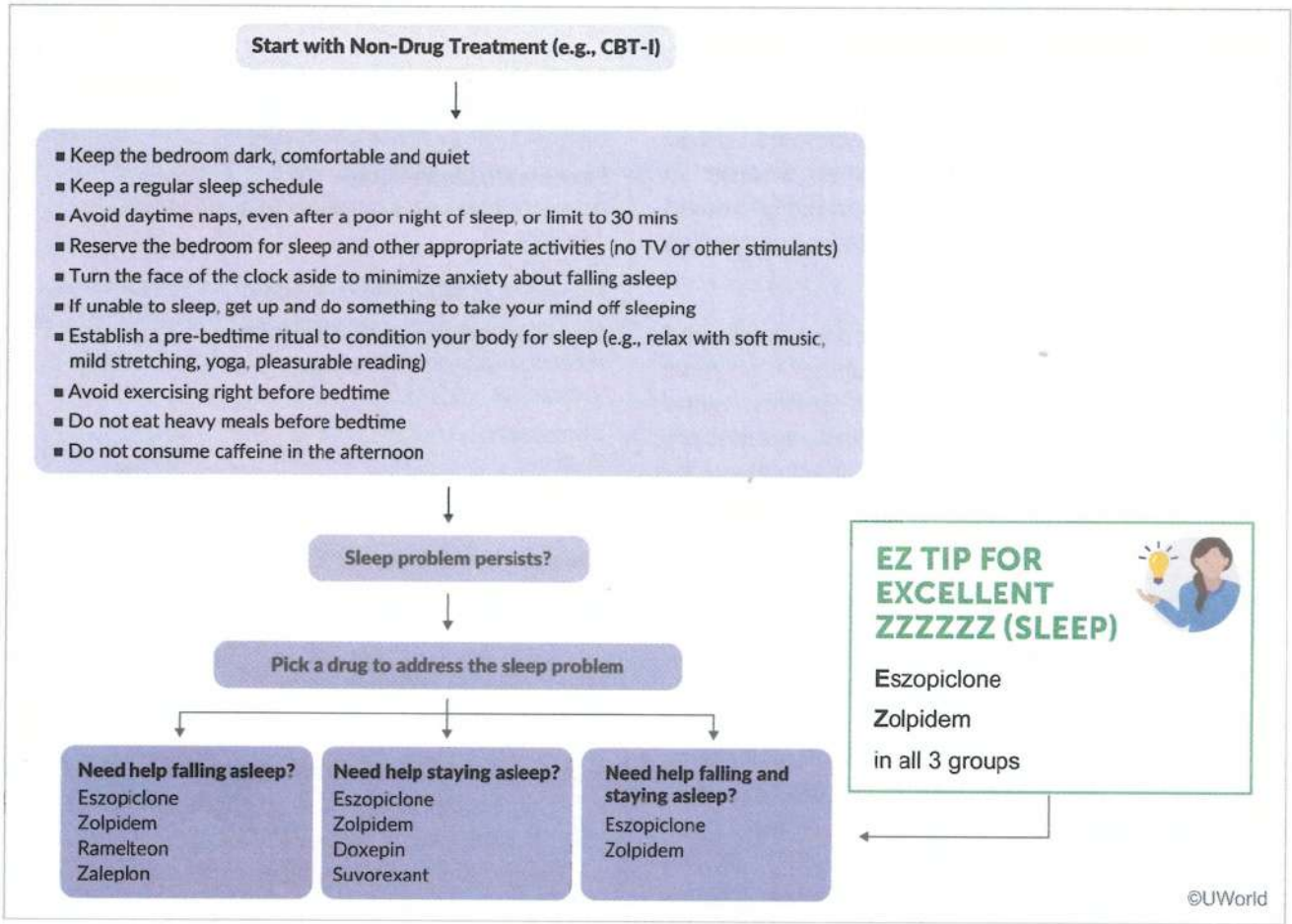
Melatonin is used for insomnia (dosed 1 – 5 mg QHS) and jet lag (dosed 0.5 – 2 mg pre-flight and 5 mg post-flight). It can cause additive adverse effects (e.g., drowsiness, daytime somnolence) if used with other CNS depressants. Melatonin is a substrate of CYP450 1A2; prolonged effects may be observed with CYP1A2 inhibitors (e.g., ciprofloxacin, fluvoxamine).

Valerian and kava are not recommended due to a risk of hepatotoxicity. Drinking chamomile tea in the evening to feel calmer can help some patients with insomnia.

DRUG TREATMENT

Sedative-hypnotics are the mainstay of treatment for chronic insomnia, though it is preferable to reserve use for when non-drug treatments have failed. Drug selection depends on the sleep problem identified (i.e., sleep onset and/or sleep maintenance). See the diagram on the following page.

GUIDELINE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHRONIC INSOMNIA



CASE SCENARIO

A 55-year-old female comes to the clinic and reports difficulty falling asleep, which impairs her ability to concentrate at work. She wakes up and stares at the clock throughout the night and takes extra naps during the day to compensate for lost sleep.

Patient Counseling: improve sleep hygiene by turning the face of the clock away and reducing naps. Consider additional CBT-I and follow up in 2–4 weeks to determine if pharmacotherapy is warranted.

In patients using pharmacotherapy long-term, non-benzodiazepines are preferred over benzodiazepines due to a decreased risk of abuse, physical dependence, tolerance and fewer daytime cognitive effects. The lowest effective dose should be used for all medications to minimize adverse effects, and treatment should be limited to the shortest duration possible.

Patients may self-treat insomnia with OTC first-generation antihistamines, such as diphenhydramine or doxylamine. While these can help short-term, they should not be used long-term for the treatment of insomnia. The American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM) guidelines state that the following treatments are not recommended for chronic use: diphenhydramine, melatonin, trazodone and valerian.

Benzodiazepines (e.g., temazepam) can be used for short-term insomnia (e.g., caused by an acute trauma) if there is no substance abuse history or current use of opioids. According to the Beers Criteria, benzodiazepines, non-benzodiazepine hypnotics (e.g., zolpidem) and first-generation antihistamines are considered potentially inappropriate in patients aged 65 years and older. If benzodiazepines are used, lorazepam, oxazepam or temazepam (L-O-T) are preferred in older adults due to the lower risk of adverse reactions.

HYPNOTICS

Non-benzodiazepine hypnotics act selectively at benzodiazepine receptors to increase GABA, an inhibitory neurotransmitter. This causes CNS depression.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Eszopiclone *(Lunesta)* C-IV	1-3 mg PO QHS	**BOXED WARNINGS** Complex sleep behavior (e.g., sleep-walking, sleep-driving, engaging in other activities while not fully awake) can lead to serious injury or death **CONTRAINDICATIONS** History of complex sleep behavior **WARNINGS** ↑ risk of CNS depression and next-day impairment with ↑ doses, < 7-8 hours of sleep, concurrent use of CNS depressants (e.g., alcohol) Abnormal thinking and behavioral changes, worsening depression, respiratory depression Potential for abuse and dependence (can cause withdrawal symptoms if used > 2 weeks) **SIDE EFFECTS** Somnolence, dizziness, ataxia, headache, lightheadedness, "pins and needles" feeling on the skin Eszopiclone: dysgeusia (altered sense of taste) **NOTES** Preferred over benzodiazepines for first-line treatment due to ↓ abuse, dependence and tolerance Do not take with fatty food or heavy meal (delays onset of action) or alcohol
Zolpidem *(Ambien, Ambien CR)* IR and ER tablets ***Edluar*** SL tablets C-IV	*Ambien, Edluar:* Female/older adult: 5 mg PO/SL QHS Male: 5-10 mg PO/SL QHS *Ambien CR:* Female/older adult: 6.25 mg PO QHS Male: 6.25-12.5 mg PO QHS	
Zaleplon *(Sonata)* C-IV	5-20 mg PO QHS	

Eszopiclone, Zolpidem and Zaleplon Drug Interactions

- Use caution in combination with potent CYP3A4 inhibitors (e.g., protease inhibitors, ketoconazole, itraconazole, erythromycin, clarithromycin).
- Additive CNS depression when used with other sedating drugs, including opioids, muscle relaxants, antihistamines, mirtazapine, trazodone and alcohol.

MELATONIN RECEPTOR AGONISTS

These drugs are agonists at MT1 and MT2 melatonin receptors. They promote sleepiness and regulate the circadian rhythm to coordinate the sleep-wake cycle.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Ramelteon *(Rozerem)*	8 mg PO QHS	**WARNING** Ramelteon: complex sleep behavior **SIDE EFFECTS** Somnolence, dizziness **NOTES** Not a controlled substance Do not take with fatty food or with fluvoxamine (CYP1A2 inhibitor that will ↑ ramelteon and tasimelteon serum concentrations)
Tasimelteon *(Hetlioz, Hetlioz LQ)* Capsule, oral suspension	20 mg PO QHS	

TRICYCLIC ANTIDEPRESSANT

Tricyclic antidepressants inhibit norepinephrine and serotonin reuptake. They also block acetylcholine and histamine receptors, which contributes to side effects (e.g., somnolence). *Silenor* is a branded formulation of doxepin that is FDA-approved for insomnia.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Doxepin *(Silenor)*	3-6 mg PO QHS 3 mg if ≥ 65 years	**BOXED WARNING** Increase in suicidal thoughts or actions in some children, teenagers or young adults within the first few months of treatment or when the dose is changed (see the Depression chapter) **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Use within 2 weeks of an MAO inhibitor, narrow angle glaucoma, severe urinary retention **WARNING** Complex sleep behavior **SIDE EFFECTS** Seizures, somnolence, anticholinergic effects

BENZODIAZEPINES

Benzodiazepines enhance GABA, an inhibitory neurotransmitter, causing CNS depression. A brief summary of the drugs that are FDA-indicated for insomnia is provided below; consult the Anxiety Disorders chapter for a full discussion of benzodiazepines.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Temazepam ***(Restoril)*** C-IV	7.5-30 mg PO QHS	**BOXED WARNINGS** Use with opioids can result in sedation, respiratory depression, coma and death Risk for abuse, misuse and addiction, which can lead to overdose or death Continued use can lead to physical dependence; abrupt discontinuation can cause life-threatening withdrawal symptoms (taper off slowly) **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Triazolam: do not use with strong CYP3A4 inhibitors (e.g., azole antifungals) **WARNINGS** Complex sleep behaviors (e.g., sleep-driving), abnormal thinking and behavioral changes, worsening depression Pregnancy: can cause birth defects and neonatal withdrawal syndrome **SIDE EFFECTS** Drowsiness, dizziness/↑ fall risk, cognitive impairment **NOTES** Temazepam is preferred for older patients
Estazolam C-IV	0.5-2 mg PO QHS	
Quazepam C-IV	7.5-15 mg PO QHS	
Flurazepam C-IV	15-30 mg PO QHS	
Triazolam *(Halcion)* C-IV	0.125-0.5 mg PO QHS	

OREXIN RECEPTOR ANTAGONISTS

The orexin neuropeptide signaling system promotes wakefulness. Orexin receptor antagonists block the orexin neuropeptide signaling system, resulting in drowsiness. These medications are major CYP3A4 substrates; use caution and implement recommended dose reductions if used with CYP3A4 inhibitors.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Daridorexant *(Quviviq)* C-IV	25-50 mg PO QHS	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Narcolepsy **WARNINGS** Worsening depression/suicidal ideation, sleep paralysis, hallucinations, cataplexy-like symptoms (sudden loss of muscle tone), complex sleep behavior, daytime impairment (risk ↑ if used with other CNS depressants) **SIDE EFFECTS** Somnolence, headache, dizziness, abnormal dreams **NOTES** Onset of action delayed if taken with a meal Not recommended in patients with severe hepatic impairment Do not take if < 7 hours of sleep remaining
Lemborexant *(DayVigo)* C-IV	5-10 mg PO QHS	
Suvorexant *(Belsomra)* C-IV	5-20 mg PO QHS	

ANTIHISTAMINES

These drugs block H1 histamine receptors.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Diphenhydramine *(Benadryl)* Rx and OTC	25-50 mg PO QHS	**SIDE EFFECTS** Sedation (tolerance to sedative effects can develop if used > 10 days), confusion (can exacerbate memory/cognition difficulty), seizures (high dose, older adults) Paradoxical excitation in young children; do not use doxylamine in children < 12 years Peripheral anticholinergic side effects: dry mouth, urinary retention, dry eyes/blurry vision, constipation **NOTES** Avoid use in BPH (can worsen symptoms) and glaucoma (can ↑ IOP) Avoid in older adults (Beers Criteria) due to confusion, dizziness, risk of falls and hypotension Some OTC *Unisom* branded-products contain diphenhydramine
Doxylamine *(Unisom SleepTabs, Sleep Aid)* OTC	25 mg PO QHS	

RESTLESS LEGS SYNDROME

Restless legs syndrome (RLS) is a neurological disorder characterized by an urge to move the lower legs. This can be accompanied by uncomfortable sensations such as tingling and a "creeping" feeling. Because symptoms are normally worse at night, there can be a significant impact on sleep.

DRUG TREATMENT

All patients with RLS should have a regular assessment of iron studies and receive iron supplementation if needed, because brain iron deficiency is part of the underlying pathophysiology.

Gabapentin enacarbil *(Horizant)* is an extended-release form of gabapentin approved for RLS. The IR formulation of gabapentin is used off-label as a less expensive alternative. Pregabalin is another off-label alternative, however, it is a controlled substance (C-V). Refer to Seizures/Epilepsy chapter for additional information.

Dopamine agonists (e.g., pramipexole, ropinirole, rotigotine) can provide symptom relief, however, they are not recommended for long-term treatment. Chronic use of dopamine agonist leads to gradual worsening of RLS.

NARCOLEPSY

Narcolepsy is excessive daytime sleepiness with cataplexy (sudden loss of muscle tone) and sleep paralysis. Narcolepsy causes sudden daytime "sleep attacks" due to poor control of normal sleep-wake cycles. The sleep attacks last a few seconds to several minutes. Patients with narcolepsy have difficulty managing daily activities; they can fall asleep while at work, school or in the middle of a conversation. Sleep quality at night is poor.

DRUG TREATMENT

Narcolepsy is treated with stimulants, such as modafinil or armodafinil, and/or sodium oxybate. Several of the stimulants used for ADHD have an indication for narcolepsy, including dextroamphetamine, dextroamphetamine/amphetamine and various methylphenidate formulations.

STIMULANTS FOR NARCOLEPSY

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Modafinil *(Provigil)* C-IV	200 mg PO QAM	**WARNINGS** Use caution in patients with pre-existing cardiac, hepatic, renal or psychiatric conditions Severe rash, can be life-threatening (e.g., Stevens-Johnson syndrome) **SIDE EFFECTS** Headache, insomnia, anxiety, nausea
Armodafinil *(Nuvigil)* R-isomer of modafinil C-IV	150-250 mg PO QAM	

SODIUM OXYBATE

These drugs are derived from GABA. They help with sleep at night and are generally used with daytime stimulants. They are taken at bedtime and have a fast onset; the patient should lie down after taking the dose.

DRUG	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Sodium oxybate *(Xyrem, Lumryz)* Calcium, magnesium, potassium and sodium oxybates *(Xywav)* Oral liquid C-III (narcolepsy) C-I (illicit use)	**BOXED WARNINGS** Strong CNS depressant; respiratory depression, coma and death can result The active moiety of oxybate salts is the sedative gamma-hydroxybutyrate (GHB), which is used illicitly and sometimes to facilitate sexual assault (due to its rapid onset and amnestic effects); to reduce the risk of abuse, these drugs are only available through REMS programs **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Use with sedative-hypnotics or alcohol **WARNINGS AND SIDE EFFECTS** Depression, suicide, psychosis, anxiety, sleepwalking, dizziness, confusion **NOTES** *Xyrem, Lumryz:* high sodium content; limiting dietary sodium may be required Rapid effects; sleep onset typically occurs within 5-15 minutes after the first dose

OTHER ORAL MEDICATIONS FOR NARCOLEPSY

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Pitolisant *(Wakix)* Histamine-3 receptor antagonist/inverse agonist	Once daily in the morning If morning dose is missed, skip the dose (do not take it later in the day, wait until the next morning)	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Severe hepatic impairment **WARNINGS** QT prolongation **SIDE EFFECTS** Insomnia, nausea, anxiety, headache
Solriamfetol *(Sunosi)* Dopamine and norepinephrine reuptake inhibitor	Once daily in the morning Avoid taking within 9 hours of planned bedtime to avoid interference with sleep	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Concomitant use with MAO inhibitors or within 14 days of discontinuation **WARNINGS** Increase in blood pressure and heart rate, psychiatric symptoms (e.g., anxiety, irritability) **SIDE EFFECTS** Headache, nausea, decreased appetite, insomnia, anxiety

KEY COUNSELING POINTS

See the Drug Formulations and Patient Counseling chapter for counseling language/layman's terminology.

NON-BENZODIAZEPINE HYPNOTICS AND OREXIN RECEPTOR ANTAGONISTS

- Can cause:
  - ☐ Drowsiness, lightheadedness, dizziness and headache. You may still feel drowsy the day after taking this medication. Use caution when driving a car or operating dangerous machinery.
  - ☐ Abnormal thoughts and behavior (e.g., more outgoing or aggressive behavior than usual, confusion, agitation, hallucinations, worsening depression, suicidal thoughts or actions).
  - ☐ Withdrawal symptoms (e.g., sweating, shakiness, cramps, nausea) if abruptly stopped.
- This medication is a federally controlled substance (C-IV) because it can be abused or lead to dependence. Keep the bottle in a safe place to prevent misuse and abuse.

ANTIHISTAMINES

- Can cause anticholinergic effects (e.g. dry mouth, urinary retention, blurry vision).

STIMULANTS

- Take in the morning to avoid difficulty falling asleep at night.

Select Guidelines/References

Clinical practice guideline for the pharmacologic treatment of chronic insomnia in adults: an American Academy of Sleep Medicine clinical practice guideline. *J Clin Sleep Med*. 2017;13(2):307-349.

Treatment of restless legs syndrome and periodic limb movement disorder: an American Academy of Sleep Medicine clinical practice guideline. J Clin Sleep Med. 2025;21(1):137–152.

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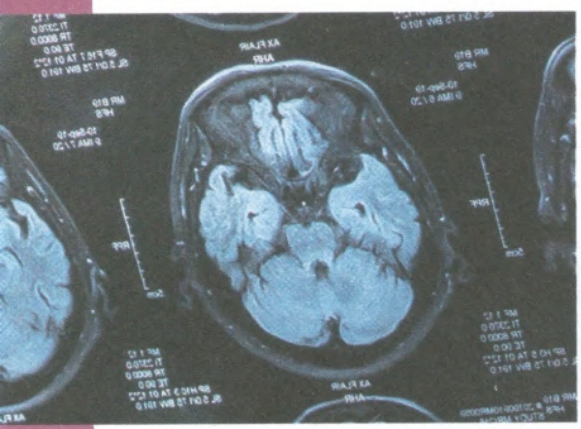
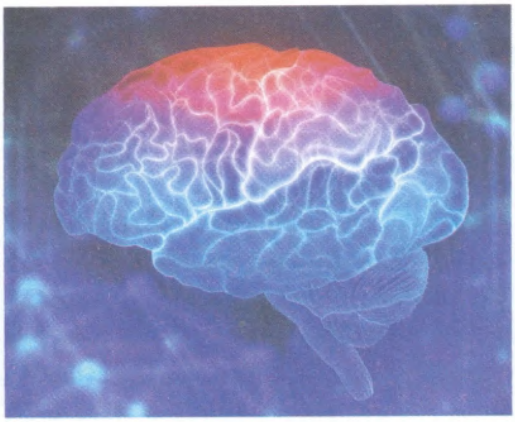
NEUROLOGIC CONDITIONS

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PARKINSON DISEASE

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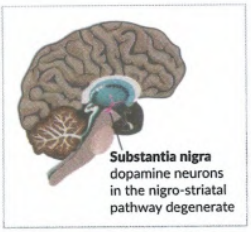
BACKGROUND

Parkinson disease (PD) is a degenerative neurological disorder. It usually develops after age 65, but 15% of cases are diagnosed under age 50. PD occurs when neurons die in the basal ganglia, which includes the substantia nigra, striatum and thalamus. The cause of neuronal death is multi-factorial but not well understood. These cells produce the neurotransmitter dopamine (DA), which enables smooth, coordinated muscle function and movement. PD motor symptoms appear when ~80% of the dopamine-producing cells are damaged (see Study Tip Gal).



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PARKINSON DISEASE SYMPTOMS

Pathophysiology:
Less dopamine → less instructions to the brain → movement problems referred to as "TRAP"

TRAP Major Symptoms:

Tremor: when resting

Rigidity: in legs, arms, trunk and face (mask-like face)

Akinesia/bradykinesia: lack of/slow start in movement

Postural instability: imbalance, falls

Additional Symptoms:

Small, cramped handwriting (micrographia)

Shuffling walk, stooped posture

Muffled speech, drooling, dysphagia

Depression, anxiety (psychosis in advanced disease)

Constipation, incontinence

Tremor is often the first noticeable symptom, and usually starts in one hand or foot (unilateral) and eventually spreads to both sides (bilateral). Resting tremor means it appears when the hand is not moving, such as when a person's hand is resting in their lap.

Medications can cause similar symptoms, mimic PD or make PD worse (see Key Drugs Guy to the right). The Abnormal Involuntary Movement Scale (AIMS) can be used to measure involuntary movements (e.g., tardive dyskinesias) from medications.

Non-motor symptoms can precede motor symptoms and may appear much earlier in the disease process. These include a loss of smell (anosmia), constipation, sleep difficulties, low mood/depression and orthostasis.

DOPAMINE BLOCKING DRUGS THAT CAN WORSEN PD

- Phenothiazines (e.g., prochlorperazine)
- Butyrophenones (e.g., haloperidol, droperidol)
- First and second-generation antipsychotics (e.g., risperidone at higher doses, paliperidone); lowest risk with quetiapine
- Metoclopramide

Even with high doses of PD drugs and various combinations, the disease will progress, including extended periods of "off time." This is when symptoms of the disease worsen before the next dose of medication is due. Symptoms can progress to severe disability, and patients can lose the ability to walk, feed themselves and swallow food.

RELATED PSYCHIATRIC CONDITIONS

Patients with PD have a high incidence of depression. SSRIs or SNRIs are commonly used for treatment, though there is some concern that they may contribute to tremor or an increased risk of serotonin syndrome in patients who are taking other serotonergic drugs. Tricyclic antidepressants, preferably secondary amines (e.g., desipramine and nortriptyline), and the dopamine agonist pramipexole (reported to provide antidepressant effects) are other options.

Psychosis can occur with advanced disease or can be due to side effects of drug treatment. Quetiapine is the preferred antipsychotic due to a low risk of movement disorders, but it can cause metabolic complications (e.g., increased cholesterol and blood glucose). Clozapine has a low risk of worsening movement disorders but has a high risk of seizures, agranulocytosis (requires frequent monitoring and reporting of white blood cells) and other serious complications. Pimavanserin (*Nuplazid*), a 5-HT2A/2C receptor inverse agonist, is FDA-approved to treat hallucinations and delusions in PD. Refer to the Schizophrenia/Psychosis chapter for a discussion of antipsychotic drugs.

Abrupt withdrawal of levodopa or dopamine agonists can lead to a condition similar to neuroleptic malignant syndrome (NMS), which is a life-threatening condition sometimes seen with antipsychotics. These must be slowly tapered when discontinued.

DRUG TREATMENT

Medications are used to improve movement, which helps related issues (e.g., psychosis, constipation); these treatments either mimic dopamine, increase dopamine or decrease acetylcholine (since dopamine depletion triggers an excess of acetylcholine); see Study Tip Gal. Levodopa, a prodrug of dopamine, is the most effective drug. Carbidopa is given with levodopa to prevent the breakdown of levodopa outside of the CNS (i.e., peripheral metabolism), which would destroy most of the drug before it crosses the blood-brain barrier. It is important to provide the right amount of carbidopa without causing excess side effects (see the drug table on the following page). Carbidopa/levodopa may be better tolerated than dopamine agonists for initial treatment in older adults.

Dopamine agonists are eventually used in most patients. As the disease progresses, treatment goals include reducing "off" periods and limiting dyskinesias (abnormal movement). This requires the use of multiple drug classes, such as catechol-o-methyltransferase (COMT) inhibitors and MAO-B inhibitors.

Centrally-acting anticholinergics (e.g., benztropine) treat PD by reducing acetylcholine activity within the CNS, which reduces motor symptoms; these are used for tremor-predominant disease in younger patients. The considerable side effects of these drugs make them difficult to use in older adults; the Beers criteria for potentially inappropriate medication use in older adults recommends to avoid use. Amantadine or a selective monoamine oxidase (MAO) inhibitor are other options for initial treatment of tremor. Note that for PD, selective MAO inhibitors are used; non-selective inhibitors that are used for depression are contraindicated with dopaminergic drugs because they would block drug metabolism.

Amantadine can be useful to help with dyskinesias, in addition to tremor. Apomorphine treats severe "freezing" episodes that occur in more advanced disease, but it requires subcutaneous administration, has worrisome side effects and only improves movement ability for about an hour. Droxidopa is indicated for orthostatic hypotension, which can affect PD patients.

PARKINSON DISEASE TREATMENT PRINCIPLES

Primary treatment: replace dopamine

- Give a drug that mimics dopamine (e.g., dopamine agonist).
- Give a drug that increases dopamine (e.g., levodopa +/- COMT inhibitor).
- Give other drugs for specific symptoms (e.g., anticholinergics for resting tremor).

DOPAMINE REPLACEMENT DRUGS & AGONISTS

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Carbidopa/levodopa: levodopa is a precursor of dopamine. Carbidopa inhibits the dopa decarboxylase enzyme, preventing peripheral metabolism of levodopa.		
Carbidopa/Levodopa IR tablet, ER tablet, ODT ***Sinemet*** Tablet *Dhivy* Scored IR tablet to facilitate titration *Rytary* ER capsule *Duopa* Enteral suspension given via J-tube *Inbrija* Levodopa capsule for oral inhaler, used as needed for symptoms during off periods *Crexont* IR carbidopa/ER levodopa *Vyalev* Foscarbidopa/ foslevodopa continuous SC injection	Titrate cautiously IR (starting dose): 25/100 mg PO TID ER (starting dose): 50/200 mg PO BID ER tab can be cut in half – do not crush or chew *Rytary:* start at 23.75/ 95 mg PO TID if levodopa-naive; take whole or sprinkle on a small amount of applesauce *Inbrija:* 84 mg (2 capsules) inhaled up to 5 times daily as needed, max dose: 420 mg/day	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Non-selective MAO inhibitors (e.g., phenelzine, isocarboxazid) within 14 days, narrow angle glaucoma **SIDE EFFECTS** Nausea, dizziness, orthostasis, dyskinesias, hallucinations, psychosis, xerostomia (dry mouth), dystonias (occasional, painful), confusion Can cause brown, black or dark discoloring of urine, saliva or sweat and can discolor clothing; positive Coombs test: discontinue drug (hemolysis risk); unusual sexual urges, priapism; ↑ uric acid *Rytary:* suicidal ideation and attempts *Duopa:* GI complications **NOTES** 70-100 mg/day of carbidopa required to inhibit dopa decarboxylase Long-term use: fluctuations in response and dyskinesias Separate from oral iron and high protein foods Do not discontinue abruptly; must be tapered *Duopa* cassettes: store in freezer, thaw in refrigerator prior to dispensing (good for 12 weeks upon refrigeration)
COMT inhibitors: increase the duration of action of levodopa; inhibit the enzyme catechol-O-methyltransferase (COMT) to prevent peripheral conversion of levodopa. COMT inhibitors should only be used with levodopa.		
Entacapone *(Comtan)* + carbidopa/levodopa *(Stalevo)*	200 mg PO with each dose of carbidopa/levodopa, max dose: 1,600 mg/day *Stalevo:* carbidopa/levodopa in a ratio of 1:4 with 200 mg of entacapone in each tablet (example: 12.5/50/200 mg)	**SIDE EFFECTS** Similar to levodopa, due to extending its duration **NOTES** ↓ in levodopa dose of 10-30% is usually necessary when adding a COMT inhibitor Dyskinesias can occur earlier with COMT inhibitors Tolcapone: rarely used due to hepatotoxicity risk
Opicapone *(Ongentys)*	50 mg PO QHS ↓ dose in liver disease	
Tolcapone *(Tasmar)*		

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Dopamine agonists: act similar to dopamine at the dopamine receptor.		
Pramipexole *(Mirapex*, Mirapex ER)* IR formulation also approved for restless legs syndrome (RLS)	IR: start with 0.125 mg PO TID, titrate weekly to max of 1.5 mg TID ER: start with 0.375 mg PO daily, titrate weekly to max of 4.5 mg daily ↓ dose if CrCl < 50 mL/min (90% renally excreted)	**WARNINGS** Somnolence (including sudden daytime sleep attacks), orthostasis, hallucinations, dyskinesias, impulse control disorders Rotigotine patch: application site (skin) reactions Pramipexole: postural deformity (e.g., bent spine, dropped head), rhabdomyolysis **SIDE EFFECTS** Dizziness, nausea, vomiting, dry mouth, peripheral edema, constipation Rotigotine: hyperhidrosis **NOTES** A slow titration (no more than weekly) is required to avoid withdrawal symptoms (e.g., anxiety, depression, insomnia, sweating); do not discontinue abruptly Ropinirole: CYP450 1A2 substrate; caution with CYP1A2 inhibitors Bromocriptine is in this class but no longer recommended **Patch** Apply once daily at the same time each day to the stomach, thigh, hip, side of the body, shoulder or upper arm; do not use the same site for at least 14 days Remove the patch before an MRI; avoid if sensitivity/allergy to sulfites
Ropinirole IR formulation also approved for RLS	IR: start with 0.25 mg PO TID, titrate weekly to max of 8 mg TID XL: start with 2 mg PO daily, titrate weekly to max of 24 mg daily	
Rotigotine *(Neupro)* Patch Also approved for RLS	Start with 2 mg/24 hrs (early PD) Max dose: 8 mg/24 hrs	
Dopamine agonist: used as a "rescue" movement drug for "off" periods.		
Apomorphine *(Apokyn)* SC injection Taken in addition to other PD medications	Start with 0.2 mL (2 mg) SC PRN (up to 5×/day); titrate by 1 mg every few days Max single dose: 0.6 mL (6 mg) Lasts 45-90 minutes Must be started with a test dose in a medical office	**CONTRAINDICATION** Do not use with 5-HT3 antagonists (e.g., ondansetron) due to severe hypotension and loss of consciousness **SIDE EFFECTS** Severe nausea/vomiting, hypotension, yawning, dyskinesias, somnolence, dizziness, QT prolongation **NOTES** Monitor supine and standing blood pressure For emesis prevention: trimethobenzamide *(Tigan)* 300 mg PO TID, or a similar antiemetic, started 3 days prior to the initial dose

**Brand discontinued but name still used in practice.*

CARBIDOPA/LEVODOPA DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Contraindicated with non-selective MAO inhibitors (a two-week separation is required).
- Iron and protein-rich foods can ↓ absorption.
- Do not use with dopamine blockers, which worsen symptoms (e.g., phenothiazines, metoclopramide).

OTHER DRUGS FOR PARKINSON DISEASE

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Amantadine: blocks dopamine reuptake into presynaptic neurons and increases dopamine release from presynaptic fibers. Primarily used to treat dyskinesias associated with peak-dose of carbidopa/levodopa.		
Amantadine IR tablet, capsule, syrup *Gocovri, Osmolex ER:* extended-release	IR: 100 mg PO BID *Gocovri:* 129 mg daily, increase weekly to max dose of 322 mg daily *Osmolex ER:* 137 mg PO daily, increase after 1 week to 274 mg daily ↓ dose in renal impairment eGFR < 15 mL/min/1.73 m^2: ER products contraindicated	**WARNINGS** Somnolence (including falling asleep without warning during activities of daily living), compulsive behaviors, psychosis (hallucinations, delusions, paranoia) **SIDE EFFECTS** Dizziness, orthostatic hypotension, syncope, insomnia, abnormal dreams, dry mouth, constipation Cutaneous reaction called livedo reticularis (reddish skin mottling – can require drug discontinuation) **NOTES** *Gocovri* is indicated for the treatment of dyskinesia in patients receiving levodopa-based therapy Avoid live vaccines while on treatment
Selective MAO-B inhibitors: block the breakdown of dopamine which increases dopaminergic activity. Primarily used as adjunctive treatment to carbidopa/levodopa; rasagiline has an indication for monotherapy.		
Selegiline Capsule, tablet *Zelapar* – ODT *Emsam* – patch; only indicated for depression	Capsule, tablet: 5 mg PO BID, with breakfast and lunch ODT: 1.25-2.5 mg daily (not recommended if CrCl < 30 mL/min) Selegiline can be activating; do not take dose at bedtime; if dosed twice daily, take the 2nd dose at midday	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Use in combination with other MAO inhibitors (including linezolid), opioids, SNRIs, TCAs, others (see Drug Interactions) *Xadago:* severe hepatic impairment **WARNINGS** Serotonin syndrome, hypertension, nausea, CNS depression, dyskinesias, impulse control disorders, caution in patients with psychotic disorders (may exacerbate) or ophthalmic disorders *(Xadago)* Rasagiline (monotherapy): headache, joint pain, indigestion **MONITORING** BP, signs of serotonin syndrome, visual changes *(Xadago)* **NOTES** May need to reduce levodopa dose when beginning treatment with a selective MAO-B inhibitor
Rasagiline *(Azilect)*	0.5-1 mg PO daily	
Safinamide *(Xadago)*	Start with 50 mg once daily; after 2 weeks may increase to 100 mg once daily When stopping treatment: decrease the dose to 50 mg for one week before discontinuing	

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Centrally-acting anticholinergics: have anticholinergic and antihistamine effects. Primarily used for tremor.		
Benztropine *(Cogentin*)*	0.5-2 mg TID (start QHS)	**SIDE EFFECTS** High incidence of peripheral and central anticholinergic effects: dry mouth, constipation, urinary retention, blurred vision, mydriasis, somnolence, confusion, tachycardia **NOTES** Avoid use in older adults
Trihexyphenidyl	1-5 mg TID (start 1 mg QHS)	
Adenosine receptor antagonist: used in combination with carbidopa/levodopa to reduce "off" episodes.		
Istradefylline *(Nourianz)*	20 mg PO daily, can titrate to a max of 40 mg daily Dose must be adjusted if used with CYP3A4 inhibitors or tobacco smoking	**WARNINGS** Hallucinations, dyskinesias, impulse control disorders **SIDE EFFECTS** Nausea, constipation
Alpha/beta agonist: used for neurogenic orthostatic hypotension.		
Droxidopa *(Northera)*	Start at 100 mg PO TID, can titrate every 24-48 hour to a max of 1800 mg/day Take the last dose at least 3 hours prior to bedtime (to avoid supine hypertension during sleep)	**BOXED WARNING** Supine hypertension: monitor supine BP prior to and during treatment; elevate the head of the bed and measure BP in this position; if supine hypertension cannot be managed by elevation of the head of the bed, reduce dose or discontinue **SIDE EFFECTS** Syncope, falls, headache

**Brand discontinued but name still used in practice.*

MAO-B INHIBITOR DRUG INTERACTIONS

- While taking, do not eat foods high in tyramine, including aged or matured cheese, air-dried or cured meats (e.g., sausages, salamis), sauerkraut, fava or broad bean pods, tap/draft beers, Marmite concentrate, soy sauce or other soybean condiments. Avoid these foods during and for two weeks after discontinuation of the medication.
- Do not use with products containing dopamine, tyrosine, phenylalanine, tryptophan or caffeine.
- Do not use with other drugs that increase the risk of serotonin syndrome. See the Drug Interactions chapter.
- Rasagiline is a CYP1A2 substrate; limit dose to 0.5 mg daily with ciprofloxacin or other CYP1A2 inhibitors.

KEY COUNSELING POINTS

See the Drug Formulations and Patient Counseling chapter for counseling language/layman's terminology.

ALL PARKINSON DISEASE PATIENTS

- Increased risk of:
  - ☐ Irregular movements, psychosis, suicidal ideation or depression.
- Treatments have many drug interactions.
- Avoid alcohol.w

CARBIDOPA/LEVODOPA

- Can cause:
  - ☐ Nausea, dizziness, orthostasis or psychosis.
  - ☐ Body fluid discoloration (e.g., dark brown urine, saliva or sweat).
  - ☐ Priapism.
- Drug interactions due to binding or delayed absorption; specifically iron and high protein foods.

DOPAMINE AGONISTS

- Can cause orthostasis, drowsiness or psychosis.

ROTIGOTINE PATCH

- Can cause skin irritation.
- Patch application:
  - ☐ Wear for 24 hours. Rotate where you place the patch. Wait at least 14 days before applying in the same location. Remove patch before an MRI.

Select Guidelines/References

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CHAPTER 69

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

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= Key Drugs Guy

BACKGROUND

Mild age-associated cognitive decline is normal and can cause bothersome symptoms, such as losing the car keys more often. If the decline is measurable, but is not severe enough to significantly interfere with daily functioning, the condition is called mild cognitive impairment (MCI).

With dementia, the decline in cognition is more severe. Intellectual and social abilities progressively worsen, and functioning becomes impaired. The most noticeable initial symptom is memory loss. As dementia progresses, patients develop difficulty with judgment, attention, planning and personal grooming. Agitation, aggression and depression can be present and are challenging for patients and caregivers.

SIGNS OF DEMENTIA

Memory loss
Difficulty planning and organizing
Getting lost in familiar places
Repeating words and information
Difficulty finding words for common objects
Inability to learn or remember new information
Apathy and social disengagement
Delusions and agitation
Poor coordination and motor function

DEMENTIA TYPES

A patient's clinical findings help characterize the dementia type (e.g., Alzheimer's disease, vascular dementia, Lewy body dementia). Alzheimer's disease is the most common type and has well-defined treatment, though the benefits are modest. The pathophysiology of Alzheimer's disease includes neuropathologic changes (e.g., amyloid beta plaques, tau tangles) that lead to the death of cholinergic neurons, resulting in decreased acetylcholine.

SCREENING AND DIAGNOSIS

An early diagnosis of dementia provides a person with time to plan for the future while he or she can still participate in decision making. Common assessment tools include the Folstein Mini-Mental State Exam (MMSE, max score is 30, a score < 24 indicates a memory disorder), the Montreal Cognitive Assessment (MoCA) and Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5) criteria. Functional abilities can be assessed using the Alzheimer's Disease Cooperative Study – Activities of Daily Living (ADCS-ADL) tool. These screening tools use various techniques to evaluate cognitive impairment (e.g., spelling a word backward, counting backward from 100 by sevens) and/or assess functional abilities with activities of daily living (e.g., bathing, dressing, using a telephone, housekeeping).

Screening should attempt to rule out reversible causes of memory impairment, such as vitamin D or B12 deficiency, depression and infection. In some patients, the use of medications can cause or exacerbate memory loss (see Key Drugs Guy on the following page). Anticholinergics are particularly concerning and are discussed below.

To determine which type of dementia a patient has, clinicians will use the pattern of neurological deficits (i.e., patient symptoms) and findings on brain imaging. For Alzheimer's disease, brain imaging, cerebrospinal fluid tests and blood tests that measure amyloid beta and tau concentrations are growing in use. If these tests correlate with the clinical picture of Alzheimer's disease, they increase the confidence of the diagnosis. Amyloid beta tests may also be used to qualify a patient for drugs that target amyloid beta plaques.

ANTICHOLINERGICS & MEMORY IMPAIRMENT

Anticholinergics are used to treat multiple conditions, including incontinence (e.g., oxybutynin), allergies or insomnia (e.g., diphenhydramine) and dystonic reactions (e.g., benztropine, diphenhydramine). A drug with high anticholinergic potency can cause acute cognitive impairment and, occasionally, psychosis and hallucinations. The effects depend on the patient's baseline cognitive function, sensitivity to the drug, drug dosing and clearance, and the number of concurrent drugs with additive effects that the patient is taking. Anticholinergics are listed as drugs to avoid per the American Geriatrics Society Beers Criteria on potentially inappropriate medications in older adults.

KEY DRUGS THAT CAN WORSEN DEMENTIA

Antipsychotics (e.g., aripiprazole, chlorpromazine)

CNS Depressants
Barbiturates (e.g., phenobarbital)

Benzodiazepines (e.g., alprazolam, clonazepam)

Opioids (e.g., hydrocodone, morphine)

Hypnotics (e.g., eszopiclone, zolpidem)

Skeletal muscle relaxants (e.g., carisoprodol)

Drugs with Anticholinergic Effects
Antiemetics (e.g., prochlorperazine)

Antihistamines (e.g., diphenhydramine, doxylamine)

Central anticholinergics (e.g., benztropine)

Peripheral anticholinergics (e.g., oxybutynin, dicyclomine)

Tricyclic antidepressants (e.g., amitriptyline)

NON-DRUG TREATMENT

The health of the blood vessels in the brain is vital for cognitive function. Controlled blood glucose, blood pressure and cholesterol throughout life can decrease the likelihood of developing vascular dementia. Physical activity, a healthy diet and cognitive rehabilitation may also prevent dementia or improve symptoms.

NATURAL PRODUCTS

Vitamin E (2,000 IU daily) may minimally slow the rate of decline for patients with mild to moderate dementia. Other supplements used for Alzheimer's disease include acetyl-L-carnitine, ginkgo biloba and vinpocetine.

DRUG TREATMENT

Drug treatment for Alzheimer's disease provides modest benefits, but the patient may have a slower clinical decline than with no treatment. For family members and caregivers, this may mean that the patient can feed themselves or use the bathroom independently for a little while longer.

Acetylcholinesterase inhibitors (e.g., donepezil) are the primary treatment for all stages of Alzheimer's disease and are recommended first line in patients with mild to moderate disease. In moderate to severe disease, memantine may be added or used alone, but combination treatment is more effective at delaying disease progression than monotherapy with either drug. Drug discontinuation is advised if dementia has advanced to the point where drug treatment lacks clinical benefit or side effects become intolerable, though some patients will experience a noticeable deterioration when medication is stopped.

Amyloid beta-directed antibodies, such as donanemab *(Kisunla)* and lecanemab *(Leqembi)*, reduce amyloid beta plaques and are indicated for the treatment of mild Alzheimer's disease. The clinical benefit of this class of drugs has yet to be demonstrated and their role in treatment is not well defined.

Depression, agitation and psychosis are challenging to diagnose and treat in patients with dementia. Antidepressants (e.g., sertraline) can be used to treat depression and anxiety. After addressing underlying causes (e.g., pain) and attempting non-pharmacologic interventions (e.g., reassurance, activities, stable environment), a trial of antipsychotic therapy may be used for agitation and psychosis if the patient remains in significant distress or poses harm to themselves or others. The antipsychotic should be discontinued when possible because of side effects, including a boxed warning for an increased risk of death in elderly patients. Brexpiprazole *(Rexulti)* is the only FDA-approved antipsychotic for the treatment of agitation associated with dementia due to Alzheimer's disease, though others (e.g., olanzapine, quetiapine) may be used off-label.

Non-Drug Interventions to Keep the Brain Healthy

- Discontinue drugs that can worsen dementia if possible (see Key Drugs Guy)
- Exercise
- Eat a healthy diet
- Control blood glucose, blood pressure and cholesterol
- Engage in activities that stimulate the brain

Drug Treatment

Mild-Moderate Alzheimer's Disease
Start an acetylcholinesterase inhibitor (donepezil, rivastigmine, galantamine)

Disease progression

Moderate-Severe Alzheimer's Disease
Start an acetylcholinesterase inhibitor and/or memantine*

**Combination treatment with memantine is more likely to delay progression of disease than monotherapy*

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ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE DRUGS

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Acetylcholinesterase inhibitors: inhibit centrally-active acetylcholinesterase, the enzyme responsible for hydrolysis (breakdown) of acetylcholine; this causes ↑ acetylcholine		
Donepezil ***Aricept:*** ODT, tablet ***Adlarity:*** patch **+ memantine *(Namzaric)***	PO: start 5 mg QHS, ↑ to 10 mg QHS after 4-6 weeks Moderate-severe disease: ↑ to 23 mg QHS after ≥ 3 months of 10 mg QHS Patch: start 5 mg/24 hrs once weekly, can increase to 10 mg/24 hrs once weekly after 4-6 weeks	**WARNINGS** Cardiac effects, including bradycardia, AV block, syncope Donepezil: QT prolongation GI effects: nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, weight loss, anorexia; ↑ risk with higher doses and lower body weight (e.g., < 55 kg) Skin reactions (all formulations), including contact dermatitis (rivastigmine) and SJS (galantamine) **SIDE EFFECTS** Insomnia, dizziness **NOTES** Donepezil is dosed QHS to ↓ nausea; if insomnia occurs, morning dosing may be preferred Slower titration (e.g., every 6 weeks) may ↓ GI side effects; if treatment interrupted ≥ 3 days, retitrate from starting dose *Adlarity:* store in refrigerator; before use, remove patch from refrigerator and allow to reach room temperature (apply within 24 hrs of removal from fridge); if transitioning from oral donepezil, apply patch at the same time as the last oral dose *Exelon:* if transitioning from oral rivastigmine, apply patch the day after the last oral dose; some products may contain metal (remove before MRI) Take oral rivastigmine and galantamine with food Galantamine solution can be mixed with liquid; drink immediately If stable on donepezil 10 mg, can switch to *Namzaric* (memantine 7 mg/donepezil 10 mg QHS) and titrate weekly
Rivastigmine *(Exelon)* Capsule, patch	PO: start 1.5 mg BID, ↑ every 2 weeks to 6 mg BID Patch: start 4.6 mg/24 hrs once daily, ↑ every 4 weeks to 13.3 mg/24 hrs once daily Hepatic impairment: max patch dose is 4.6 mg/24 hrs	
Galantamine Tablet, capsule, solution Benzgalantamine *(Zunveyl)*: prodrug of galantamine	IR: start 4 mg BID, ↑ every 4 weeks to 12 mg BID *Zunveyl:* start 5 mg BID, ↑ every 4 weeks to 15 mg BID ER capsule: start 8 mg daily, ↑ every 4 weeks to 24 mg daily Severe hepatic/renal impairment: do not use	

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
N-methyl-D-aspartate (NMDA) receptor blocker: prevents glutamate (an excitatory neurotransmitter) from binding to the NMDA receptor and causing overstimulation and neuronal death		
Memantine *(Namenda)* Tablet, capsule, oral solution **+ donepezil *(Namzaric)***	IR: start 5 mg daily, ↑ weekly to 10 mg BID ER: start 7 mg daily, ↑ weekly to 28 mg daily Can switch IR 10 mg BID to ER 28 mg daily; begin ER the day after the last IR dose CrCl < 30 mL/min: max dose 5 mg BID (IR) or 14 mg daily (ER)	**WARNINGS** Caution with drugs (e.g., sodium bicarbonate, acetazolamide) or conditions (e.g., severe urinary tract infection) that ↑ urine pH, which ↓ clearance of memantine **SIDE EFFECTS** Generally well-tolerated, dizziness, confusion, headache, constipation **NOTES** ER capsule and *Namzaric:* do not crush or chew; capsules can be opened and sprinkled on applesauce (swallow immediately) Oral solution: use provided dosing syringe and squirt into mouth The brand name NaMenDA has NMDA embedded in the name

ACETYLCHOLINESTERASE INHIBITOR DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Use caution with other drugs that can lower heart rate (e.g., beta-blockers, diltiazem, verapamil, digoxin).
- Drugs that have anticholinergic effects can reduce the efficacy of acetylcholinesterase inhibitors.
- Acetylcholinesterase inhibitors can increase gastric acid secretion; use caution in patients at risk of GI bleeding (e.g., concurrent NSAID use, history of GI ulcers).

KEY COUNSELING POINTS

See the Drug Formulations and Patient Counseling chapter for counseling language/layman's terminology.

ALL ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE MEDICATIONS

- Tell your healthcare provider which prescription and over-the-counter medications you are taking; other drugs can worsen memory problems.

ACETYLCHOLINESTERASE INHIBITORS

- Can cause:
  - ☐ Nausea and vomiting. Take donepezil at bedtime.
  - ☐ Diarrhea.
  - ☐ Decreased heart rate.

ADLARITY PATCH

- Store the patch in the refrigerator. When ready to apply a patch, remove one pouch from the box and allow it to come to room temperature naturally (do not apply a heat source). The patch must be used within 24 hours of removal from the refrigerator.
- Apply a new patch at the same time each week to the upper or lower back (preferred site), upper buttocks or upper outer thigh.
- Rotate application sites. Do not use the same site within 14 days.
- After 7 days, remove the used patch. Do not touch the sticky side. Fold the patch in half with the sticky sides together and dispose of it in the trash.

EXELON PATCH

- Apply a new patch at the same time each day to the upper or lower back (preferred sites if patient might remove patch), or the upper arm or chest.
- Rotate application sites. Do not use the same site within 14 days.
- After 24 hours, remove the used patch. Do not touch the sticky side. Fold the patch in half with the sticky sides together and dispose of it in the trash.

Select Guidelines/References

Rabins PV, Rovner BW, Rummans T, et al. APA Guideline Watch (October 2014): Practice Guideline for the Treatment of Patients with Alzheimer's Disease and Other Dementias. https://psychiatryonline.org/pb/assets/raw/sitewide/practice_guidelines/guidelines/alzheimerwatch.pdf.

CHAPTER 70

SEIZURES/EPILEPSY

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= Study Tip Gal = Key Drugs Guy = Required Formula

BACKGROUND

A seizure occurs when excitatory neurons produce a sudden surge of uncontrolled electrical activity in the brain. Seizures can be caused by temporary conditions such as fever (common in children), infection, alcohol withdrawal, hypoglycemia or electrolyte abnormalities; in these cases, treating the underlying cause stops the seizure. Some drugs can lower the seizure threshold, making a person more susceptible to a seizure. These drugs should be avoided in a person with a history of seizures. See the Key Drugs Guy to the right.

Epilepsy is a chronic seizure disorder. It is a condition with various types of seizures and drug treatments available. These drugs are known as antiseizure medications (ASMs), sometimes also referred to as antiepileptic drugs (AEDs). Seizures vary from uncontrolled jerking movements (e.g., tonic-clonic seizures) to subtle momentary loss of awareness (e.g., absence seizures). Seizures can damage and destroy neurons, which causes brain damage and can be life-threatening.

The incidence of epilepsy is highest in the young and the elderly. One-third of new cases in the U.S. each year are in children and adolescents. Seizures caused by a high fever in infants and young children do not usually lead to epilepsy. The elderly are at risk for seizures due to conditions that are more prevalent in the elderly, including dementia, brain tumors and damage from a stroke.

Severe head trauma from motor vehicle accidents, sports injuries, falls and other events can lead to brain damage and cause seizures; emergency room treatment for such injuries often includes prevention or treatment of seizures. Half of all seizure cases have no identifiable cause and are attributed to a combination of environmental exposures or genetic factors.

Individuals with epilepsy are evaluated for age of onset, seizure type, seizure frequency, description of witnessed seizure, identifiable causes or triggers and a thorough neurologic exam. An electroencephalogram (EEG), the most common test used to diagnose epilepsy, records electrical activity in the brain. An EEG can show abnormal patterns even when the patient is not having a seizure. Brain imaging with a CT or MRI can identify conditions that provoke seizures (e.g., brain tumor, damage from a stroke).

DRUGS THAT CAN CAUSE SEIZURES

KEY DRUGS

Analgesics
Opioids (esp. tramadol, meperidine)*

Anti-infectives
Quinolones
Carbapenems*
Cephalosporins*
Penicillins*
Mefloquine

Psychiatric medications
Bupropion
Antipsychotics (esp. clozapine)
Lithium*
Tricyclic antidepressants*

Others:
Baclofen*
Diphenhydramine*
Metoclopramide
Metronidazole*
Theophylline
Varenicline
Stimulants (e.g., methylphenidate)*

**High doses and/or renal impairment ↑ risk*

CLASSIFICATION OF SEIZURE TYPES

Seizures are classified based on where the seizure starts in the brain: focal seizures, generalized seizures and unknown onset seizures.

Focal seizures start on one side of the brain but can spread to the other side. Generalized seizures start on both sides of the brain. Seizures are classified as unknown onset if the seizures are unwitnessed or occur during the night and the initial symptom presentation is not known.

Focal seizures are further classified based on the patient's level of awareness during the seizure:

- Focal aware seizure: the patient experiences no loss of consciousness (previously known as a simple partial seizure).
- Focal seizure with impaired awareness: the patient experiences loss of consciousness (previously known as a complex partial seizure).

Patients with generalized seizures experience loss of consciousness during the seizure event.

All seizure types can be described based on symptoms. Motor symptoms include rhythmic jerking movements (clonic), limp or weak muscles (atonic), muscle

twitching (myoclonus) and rigid or tense muscles (tonic). Non-motor symptoms include changes in sensation, emotion, thinking or cognition. Generalized seizures with non-motor symptoms are called absence seizures, which present as staring spells.

ACUTE SEIZURE MANAGEMENT

Most seizures last less than two minutes and do not require medical intervention. Seizures that continue longer cause brain damage and can be fatal. Status epilepticus (SE) is a seizure that lasts five minutes or more due to the normal mechanisms that terminate seizures not working. This is a medical emergency; emergency treatment should begin with any seizure lasting longer than five minutes.

SE management is divided into phases (see figure). Preferred initial treatment is a benzodiazepine injection. Intravenous (IV) access can be difficult during a seizure; if it is not possible to insert an IV line, midazolam can be given intramuscularly (IM). If the patient is not in a medical facility, diazepam rectal gel or intranasal or buccal midazolam are non-injectable options.

STATUS EPILEPTICUS TREATMENT

0-5 minutes
Stabilization phase

Stabilize circulation, airway and breathing
Time the seizure, start ECG
Check ASM levels and electrolytes
If blood glucose is low, treat with dextrose

↓

5-20 minutes
Initial treatment phase

If seizures continue:
Give IV lorazepam, IM midazolam or IV diazepam
Alternatives: rectal diazepam, intranasal or buccal midazolam

↓

20-40 minutes
Second treatment phase

If seizures continue:
Give nonbenzodiazepine ASM:
IV fosphenytoin, valproic acid or levetiracetam
Alternative: IV phenobarbital

↓

Third treatment phase (refractory)

No clear evidence to guide therapy
Repeat second-line therapy or midazolam, pentobarbital or propofol

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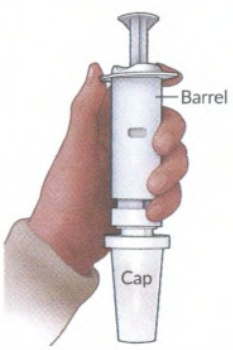
DIAZEPAM RECTAL GEL DISPENSING

Each package contains two rectal syringes prefilled with diazepam rectal gel.

Each syringe MUST be dialed to the right dose and locked BEFORE DISPENSING. Syringes come in 2.5, 10 and 20 mg.

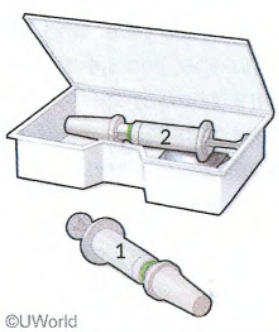
Pharmacist instructions for locking in the dose are included on a card in the package:



Hold the barrel of the syringe in one hand with the cap facing down and the dose window visible. Do not remove the cap.

Use the other hand to grab the cap firmly and turn to adjust the dose.

Confirm the correct dose shows in the window. Hold the locking ring at the bottom of the syringe barrel and push upward on both sides of the ring. Once locked, the green band should say "READY," and the syringe cannot be unlocked.



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Repeat with the second syringe in the case. Check both syringes with the patient before they leave the pharmacy to ensure they are dialed and locked. See the Key Counseling Points section for administration instructions.

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Diazepam rectal gel is prescribed for patients who are at risk of long-lasting seizures. It includes special dispensing and counseling requirements for pharmacists (see Study Tip Gal on previous page).

CHRONIC SEIZURE MANAGEMENT

ASMs are first-line treatment for epilepsy. The initial one or two drugs will provide adequate control in approximately 70% of cases. Seizures that are resistant to ASMs need to be addressed another way; uncontrolled seizures cause brain damage and can be fatal. ASMs should not be stopped abruptly as this can lead to increased seizures.

ADJUVANT TREATMENTS

Adjuvant treatments for chronic seizure management include medical marijuana (cannabis), a ketogenic diet, vagal nerve stimulation or surgical intervention.

MEDICAL MARIJUANA (CANNABIS)

There are patients with resistant seizures who receive some degree of seizure control with medical cannabis. *Epidiolex* [cannabidiol (CBD)] is an FDA-approved cannabis-derived drug to treat rare forms of epilepsy. It does not contain tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), but other medical marijuana products contain varying amounts of THC. Pharmacists should consider the impact of additive CNS side effects (e.g., somnolence, euphoria, anxiety, paranoia) and drug interactions.

KETOGENIC DIET

A ketogenic diet can be used in patients with refractory seizures (not responding to medications). The diet contains high fat, normal protein and low carbohydrates (usually a 4:1 ratio of fats to combined protein and carbohydrates) to force the body to break down fatty acids into ketone bodies as the primary energy source. Ketone bodies pass into the brain and replace glucose. This elevated ketone state is called ketosis and can lead to a reduction in seizure frequency.

ANTISEIZURE MEDICATIONS

Broad-spectrum ASMs (e.g., lamotrigine, levetiracetam, topiramate, valproic acid) treat focal and generalized seizures. Narrow-spectrum ASMs primarily treat focal seizures. Some ASMs are used for isolated conditions, such as ethosuximide for absence seizures.

The ASM drug tables in this chapter are organized by therapeutic spectrum and frequency of use. Pregabalin and gabapentin are not listed with common ASMs; they are more often used to treat neuropathic pain. The section on other ASMs includes drugs that are used less commonly but have important safety issues.

COMMON CONCERNS WITH ASMS

An ASM is selected based on patient-specific factors, including seizure type, age, childbearing potential and daily activities. The best ASM for one patient may not be appropriate for another with the same seizure type; consider the following when selecting an ASM.

CNS AND PSYCHIATRIC EFFECTS

Regardless of the specific mechanism of action, all ASMs decrease electrical activity in the brain and must cross the blood-brain barrier. Because of this, all ASMs increase the risk of CNS depression (e.g., dizziness, confusion, sedation, ataxia) and therefore increase the risk for cognitive impairment, falls and injuries. The degree of CNS depression is an important consideration when selecting treatment for patients who need to perform cognitive tasks, such as driving or studying for school.

All ASMs also have a warning for suicide risk and require monitoring for changes in mood or behavior, especially in patients with psychiatric conditions.

BONE LOSS

ASMs can cause bone loss and increase fracture risk. All patients on ASMs should supplement with calcium and vitamin D. Bone loss can occur as soon as two years after starting an ASM. Address modifiable factors that affect bone density (see the Osteoporosis, Menopause & Testosterone Use chapter).

RASH

Many ASMs can cause serious skin rash, including Stevens-Johnson syndrome (SJS) and toxic epidermal necrolysis (TEN). Higher ASM blood levels increase this risk.

Drug reaction with eosinophilia and systemic symptoms (DRESS) is a multiorgan hypersensitivity reaction that includes skin manifestations (e.g., maculopapular rash) that can occur with ASMs.

TAKE YOUR VITAMINS ON ASMs!

Supplement with:

- ALL ASMs: calcium and vitamin D
- Females of childbearing age: folate
- Valproic acid: possibly carnitine (see drug table)
- Lamotrigine and valproic acid: if alopecia develops, supplement with biotin, selenium and zinc

ASM MECHANISMS OF ACTION

DRUG/CLASS	MECHANISM OF ACTION
Benzodiazepines	Enhances GABA effect
Phenobarbital	
Valproate	Blocks sodium channels and ↑ GABA
Levetiracetam	Inhibits vesicle fusion by binding SV2A proteins
Carbamazepine	Blocks sodium channels
Phenytoin/ Fosphenytoin	
Topiramate	
Lamotrigine	Blocks sodium channels and ↓ glutamate
Ethosuximide	Blocks T-type Ca channels

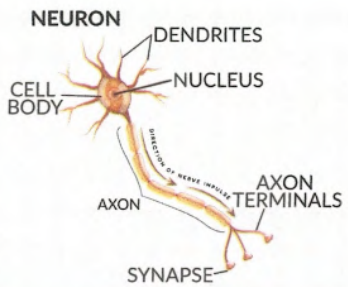
DESCRIPTION

A seizure is an episode of sudden, uncontrolled neuronal firing within the brain. The electrical activity is caused by receptor malfunction or imbalance of neurotransmitters (NTs).

Seizures can occur due to a deficiency of the inhibitory NT, gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA), or an excess of the excitatory NT, glutamate.

ASMs ↓ abnormal electrical activity by:

- ↑ GABA
- ↓ Glutamate
- Blocking (or altering) Ca channels, which slows down or stops transmission of the electrical signal
- Blocking Na channels, which ↓ the neuronal firing rate



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COMMON BROAD-SPECTRUM ANTISEIZURE MEDICATIONS

LAMOTRIGINE

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Lamotrigine *(Lamictal, Lamictal ODT, Lamictal Starter Kit, Lamictal XR,* Subvenite, Subvenite Starter Kit-Blue, Green, Orange) Tablet, chewable, ODT Also used for bipolar disorder	**Initial (standard dosing):** Weeks 1 and 2: 25 mg daily Weeks 3 and 4: 50 mg daily Week 5 and on: can ↑ by 50 mg daily every 1-2 weeks Can vary based on interacting drugs **Maintenance dose:** IR: 225-375 mg daily, divided BID XR: 300-400 mg daily	**BOXED WARNING** Serious skin reactions, including SJS/TEN (rate of rash is greater in pediatrics than adults); ↑ risk with higher than recommended starting doses, dose escalation or when used with valproic acid **WARNINGS** Multiorgan hypersensitivity reactions (DRESS), aseptic meningitis, blood dyscrasias, cardiac rhythm abnormalities, serious rare immune system reaction [hemophagocytic lymphohistiocytosis (HLH)] that can be fatal **SIDE EFFECTS** Alopecia (supplement with biotin, selenium and zinc), N/V, somnolence, rash, tremor, ataxia, ↓ coordination, dizziness, diplopia, blurred vision **MONITORING** Rash, fever **NOTES** Discontinue if any sign of hypersensitivity reaction or unspecified rash Use starter kit when starting to ensure correct doses (see Study Tip Gal) If discontinued for ≥ 5 half-lives (> 6 days for most patients), restart initial dosing titration

LAMOTRIGINE DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Drugs that induce or inhibit UGT, the enzyme responsible for lamotrigine glucuronidation, can alter lamotrigine concentrations.
- Valproic acid ↑ lamotrigine concentrations more than two-fold; use lower dose starter kit (blue box).
- Estrogen-containing hormonal contraceptives can ↓ levels of lamotrigine; higher maintenance doses of lamotrigine may be needed.
- Carbamazepine, phenytoin, phenobarbital, rifampin, primidone, lopinavir/ritonavir and atazanavir/ritonavir ↓ lamotrigine levels by 40%. Use the higher dose starter kit (green box).

LAMOTRIGINE STARTER KITS BY COLOR

Lamotrigine doses need to be just right.

- Too much leads to a higher risk of severe rash.
- Too little leads to seizures.

The colored starter kits are helpful to make sure the right dose is selected.

BLUE	ORANGE	GREEN
■ Lower starting dose ■ Use if taking valproic acid (enzyme inhibitor)	■ Standard starting dose ■ Use if no interacting medications	■ Higher starting dose ■ Use if taking an enzyme inducer (e.g., carbamazepine, phenytoin, phenobarbital, primidone) and not taking valproic acid

LEVETIRACETAM

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Levetiracetam *(Keppra, Keppra XR, Elepsia XR, Spritam)* Tablet, ODT, oral solution, injection	**Initial:** 500 mg BID or 1,000 mg daily (XR) **Maximum:** 3,000 mg/day **CrCl ≤ 80 mL/min:** ↓ dose IV:PO ratio 1:1	**WARNINGS** Psychiatric reactions, including psychotic symptoms, somnolence, fatigue, aggression, anxiety and suicidal behavior; anaphylaxis, angioedema, coordination difficulties, severe skin reactions (SJS/TEN), multiorgan hypersensitivity reactions (DRESS), hematologic abnormalities (e.g., anemia), loss of seizure control during pregnancy **SIDE EFFECTS** Somnolence, dizziness, weakness, asthenia **NOTES** No significant drug interactions

TOPIRAMATE

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Topiramate *(Topamax, Topamax Sprinkle, Eprontia)* Topiramate ER *(Qudexy XR, Trokendi XR)* Capsule, ER capsule, tablet, oral solution Also used for migraine prophylaxis	**Initial:** Week 1: 25 mg BID (IR) or 50 mg daily (XR) Weeks 2-4: ↑ by 25 mg BID (IR) or 50 mg daily (XR) each week Week 5 and on: ↑ by 100 mg weekly until max dose or therapeutic effect **Maximum:** 400 mg/day **CrCl < 70 mL/min:** ↓ dose by 50%	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** *Trokendi XR* only: alcohol use 6 hrs before or after dose *Qudexy XR* only: patients with metabolic acidosis who are taking metformin **WARNINGS** Hyperchloremic non-anion gap metabolic acidosis, oligohidrosis (reduced perspiration)/hyperthermia (mostly in children), nephrolithiasis (kidney stones), acute myopia and secondary angle-closure glaucoma, hyperammonemia (alone and with valproic acid), visual problems (reversible), fetal harm **SIDE EFFECTS** Somnolence, dizziness, psychomotor slowing, difficulty with memory/concentration/attention, weight loss, anorexia, paresthesia **MONITORING** Electrolytes, bicarbonate, renal function, hydration status, eye exam (intraocular pressure) **NOTES** *Topamax Sprinkle:* swallow whole or open and sprinkle on soft food (do not chew; swallow immediately)

TOPIRAMATE DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Topiramate is a weak inhibitor of CYP2C19 and inducer of CYP3A4.
- Phenytoin, carbamazepine, valproic acid and lamotrigine can decrease topiramate levels.
- Topiramate can decrease effectiveness of oral contraceptives, (especially doses > 200 mg/day). Non-hormonal contraception is recommended.
- Topiramate can decrease the INR in patients on warfarin; monitor closely.

VALPROATE

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Valproic acid Capsule, syrup Valproate sodium IV **Divalproex *(Depakote, Depakote ER, Depakote Sprinkle)*** *Depakote* – delayed-release (DR) tablet *Depakote ER* – extended-release (ER) tablet *Depakote Sprinkle* – capsules can be opened and sprinkled on food Also used for bipolar disorder and migraine prophylaxis	**Initial:** 10-15 mg/kg/day **Maximum:** 60 mg/kg/day **Therapeutic range:** 50-100 mcg/mL (total level) If albumin is low (< 3.5 g/dL), the free (unbound) concentration of valproic acid may be elevated while the total concentration appears normal or low (see the Pharmacokinetics chapter) DR and ER formulations are not bioequivalent; ↑ total daily dose 8-20% when converting from DR to ER tablets	**BOXED WARNINGS** Hepatic failure: usually in first 6 months of therapy, children age < 2 years and patients with mitochondrial disorders are at ↑ risk; fetal harm (neural tube defects and ↓ IQ scores); pancreatitis **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Hepatic disease, urea cycle disorders, prophylaxis of migraine in pregnancy, certain mitochondrial disorders if age < 2 years **WARNINGS** Hyperammonemia (treat with carnitine in symptomatic adults only), hypothermia, dose-related thrombocytopenia (↑ bleeding risk), multiorgan hypersensitivity reactions (DRESS) **SIDE EFFECTS** Alopecia (supplement with biotin, selenium and zinc), nausea, vomiting, weight changes (gain > loss), headache, anorexia, abdominal pain, dizziness, somnolence, tremor, edema, diplopia, blurred vision **MONITORING** LFTs (baseline and frequently in the first 6 months), CBC with differential (especially platelets), valproate levels, ammonia **NOTES** Divalproex is a valproic acid derivative The term "valproate" is used to refer to any formulation of valproic acid, valproate sodium or divalproex

VALPROATE DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Valproate is an inhibitor of CYP2C9 (weak) and UGT, a substrate of CYP2C19 and 2E1 (minor) and can displace certain drugs from protein-binding sites (e.g., warfarin).
- Valproate can ↑ levels of lamotrigine, phenobarbital, phenytoin, warfarin and zidovudine.
- Salicylates displace valproate from albumin (↑ levels).
- Carbapenem antibiotics can ↓ levels of valproate.
- Estrogen-containing hormonal contraceptives can ↓ valproate levels.
- Use caution with valproate and lamotrigine due to risk of serious rash; use lower starting dose of lamotrigine and titrate slowly.
- Use with topiramate can lead to hyperammonemia with or without encephalopathy.

COMMON NARROW-SPECTRUM ANTISEIZURE MEDICATIONS

LACOSAMIDE

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Lacosamide ***(Vimpat)*** C-V Tablet, oral solution, injection	**Initial:** 50-100 mg BID **Maximum:** 400 mg/day **CrCl < 30 mL/min:** Maximum dose is 300 mg/day IV:PO ratio 1:1	**WARNINGS** Prolongs PR interval and ↑ risk of arrhythmias; obtain an ECG prior to use and after titrated to steady state in patients with or at risk of cardiac conduction problems; multiorgan hypersensitivity reactions (DRESS), syncope, dizziness, ataxia **SIDE EFFECTS** Dizziness, headache, diplopia, blurred vision, ataxia, tremor, euphoria **MONITORING** ECG (baseline and at steady state) in at-risk patients

LACOSAMIDE DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Lacosamide is a substrate of CYP2C19 (minor), 2C9 (minor), 3A4 (minor) and an inhibitor of CYP2C19 (weak). Caution with inhibitors of 2C19, 2C9 and 3A4 (can ↑ lacosamide).
- Use caution with medications that prolong the PR interval (e.g., beta-blockers, calcium channel blockers, digoxin) due to the risk of AV block and bradycardia.

CARBAMAZEPINE

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Carbamazepine ***(Tegretol, Tegretol XR,*** *Carbatrol, Epitol)* Capsule, tablet, chewable, oral suspension *Equetro* – for bipolar disorder Also used for trigeminal neuralgia	**Initial:** 200 mg BID (or 100 mg QID for suspension) **Maximum:** 1,600 mg/day (some patients can require more) **Therapeutic range:** 4-12 mcg/mL	**BOXED WARNINGS** Serious skin reactions, including SJS/TEN: HLA-B*1502 allele testing is required for patients of Asian descent prior to starting treatment; if positive for this allele, carbamazepine cannot be used (unless benefit clearly outweighs risk); aplastic anemia and agranulocytosis; discontinue if significant myelosuppression occurs **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Myelosuppression, hypersensitivity to TCAs, use of MAO inhibitors within past 14 days, use with nefazodone or non-nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitors (NNRTIs) that are substrates of CYP3A4 **WARNINGS** Risk of developing a hypersensitivity reaction increases with the variant HLA-A*3101 allele, multiorgan hypersensitivity reactions (DRESS), hyponatremia (SIADH), hypothyroidism, increases intraocular pressure, cardiac conduction abnormalities, liver damage, fetal harm **SIDE EFFECTS** Dizziness, drowsiness, ataxia, N/V, pruritus, photosensitivity, blurred vision, rash, ↑ LFTs, alopecia, renal impairment **MONITORING** CBC with differential (including platelets) prior to and during therapy, LFTs, rash, eye exam, thyroid function tests, Na, renal function Monitor levels within 3-5 days of initiation and after 4 weeks due to autoinduction **NOTES** Enzyme inducer, autoinducer – ↓ level of other drugs and itself

CARBAMAZEPINE DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Carbamazepine is an autoinducer and decreases its own levels.
- Carbamazepine is a strong inducer of CYP3A4 and also induces CYP1A2, 2B6, 2C19, 2C9 and P-glycoprotein (P-gp). It can ↓ the levels of many drugs, including other ASMs, aripiprazole, levothyroxine, warfarin and hormonal contraceptives. Use of an alternative, non-hormonal contraceptive is recommended.
- Carbamazepine is a major CYP3A4 substrate; inhibitors will ↑ carbamazepine levels and inducers will ↓ carbamazepine levels. Do not use with nefazodone or NNRTIs.
- Carbamazepine suspension should not be taken with other liquid medications; precipitates can form.

OXCARBAZEPINE

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Oxcarbazepine ***(Trileptal,*** *Oxtellar XR)* Tablet, oral suspension *(Trileptal)* Extended-release tablet *(Oxtellar XR)*	**Initial:** 300 mg BID *(Trileptal)*; 600 mg daily *(Oxtellar XR)* **Maximum:** 2,400 mg/day **CrCl < 30 mL/min:** Start 300 mg daily Carbamazepine to oxcarbazepine dose conversion: 1.5x carbamazepine dose	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Hypersensitivity to eslicarbazepine **WARNINGS** ↑ risk for serious skin reactions (SJS/TEN), consider screening patients of Asian descent for HLA-B*1502 prior to initiating therapy, multiorgan hypersensitivity reactions (DRESS) Hyponatremia, hypothyroidism, potential worsening of generalized seizures **SIDE EFFECTS** Somnolence, dizziness, N/V, abdominal pain, diplopia, visual disturbances, ataxia, tremor **MONITORING** Serum Na (especially during the first 3 months of treatment), thyroid function, CBC **NOTES** Structurally similar to carbamazepine *Trileptal* oral suspension: use within 7 weeks once original container is opened XR tablet: take on empty stomach 1 hour before or 2 hours after a meal

OXCARBAZEPINE DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Oxcarbazepine is a weak CYP3A4 inducer and CYP2C19 inhibitor but is not an autoinducer. Strong CYP3A4 inducers can ↓ oxcarbazepine levels. Oxcarbazepine can ↑ levels of fosphenytoin, phenytoin and phenobarbital.
- Oxcarbazepine can ↓ hormonal contraceptive levels; non-hormonal contraception is recommended.

PHENYTOIN/FOSPHENYTOIN

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Phenytoin ***(Dilantin, Dilantin Infatabs,*** *Phenytek)* Capsule, chewable, oral suspension, injection (IV only)	**Loading dose:** 15-20 mg/kg (dose can be divided) **Maintenance dose:** Up to 300-600 mg/day **Therapeutic range:** 10-20 mcg/mL (total level) 1-2 mcg/mL (free level) Fraction of unbound (free) drug is higher with renal or hepatic failure or low albumin IV:PO ratio 1:1	**BOXED WARNINGS** Phenytoin IV administration rate should not exceed 50 mg/minute and fosphenytoin IV should not exceed 150 mg PE/minute or 2 mg PE/kg/min (use the slower rate); if given faster, hypotension and cardiac arrhythmias can occur **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Previous hepatotoxicity due to phenytoin **WARNINGS** Extravasation (leading to purple glove syndrome, characterized by edema, pain and bluish skin discoloration, which can lead to tissue necrosis) Avoid phenytoin in patients with a positive HLA-B*1502 test and in patients who have had a severe rash with carbamazepine Multiorgan hypersensitivity reactions (DRESS), fetal harm, bradycardia, ↑ risk of serious skin reactions (SJS/TEN), blood dyscrasias, cardiac arrest (caution in cardiac disease), hepatic and renal impairment, hypothyroidism **SIDE EFFECTS** **Dose-related (toxicity):** Nystagmus, ataxia, diplopia/blurred vision, slurred speech, dizziness, somnolence, lethargy, confusion or delirium **Chronic:** Gingival hyperplasia, hepatotoxicity, morbilliform rash, rash, peripheral neuropathy, ↑ BG, metallic taste, connective tissue hyperplasia **MONITORING** Serum phenytoin concentration, LFTs, CBC with differential IV: continuous cardiac (ECG, BP, HR) and respiratory function **NOTES** See adjusting phenytoin doses for low albumin later in the chapter
Fosphenytoin ***(Cerebyx)*** Injection (IV/IM) Prodrug of phenytoin	Fosphenytoin is dosed in phenytoin equivalents (PE): 1 mg PE = 1 mg phenytoin (1.5 mg fosphenytoin = 1 mg PE)	

PHENYTOIN/FOSPHENYTOIN DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Phenytoin and fosphenytoin are strong inducers of several enzymes, including CYP2C19, 2C8/9, 3A4, P-gp and UGT1A1; they are substrates of CYP2C19 (major), 2C9 (major) and 3A4 (minor). They can ↓ the concentration of many drugs, including other ASMs, contraceptives and warfarin.
- Use of an alternative, non-hormonal contraceptive is recommended with chronic phenytoin treatment.
- Both have high protein binding and can displace or be displaced by other highly protein-bound drugs. This can ↑ free drug levels and lead to toxicity.

PHENYTOIN/FOSPHENYTOIN ADMINISTRATION

IV Phenytoin
- Do not exceed 50 mg/minute (slow infusion)
- Monitor BP, respiratory function and ECG
- Requires a filter
- Dilute in NS, stable for 4 hours, do not refrigerate

NG-tube Phenytoin
- Enteral feedings (e.g., tube feeds) ↓ phenytoin absorption; consider separating tube feedings from phenytoin administration
- Monitor phenytoin levels closely

IV Fosphenytoin
- Do not exceed 150 mg PE/minute
- Monitoring same as above
- Lower risk of purple glove syndrome than phenytoin

PHENYTOIN MONITORING

The metabolism of phenytoin can become saturated; when there are no enzymes available to metabolize the drug, a small increase in the dose can lead to a large increase in the drug concentration. See the Study Tip Gal on adjusting phenytoin doses. It is important to monitor levels and make dose changes carefully.

CASE SCENARIO

A patient has a total phenytoin level of 13 mcg/mL and labs as follows: SCr 1.1 mg/dL, albumin 3.1 g/dL. What is the corrected phenytoin level (round to the nearest TENTH)?

Phenytoin correction = 13 / (0.2 × 3.1) + 0.1

Phenytoin correction = 18.1 mcg/mL

ADJUSTING PHENYTOIN DOSES

Phenytoin follows Michaelis-Menten kinetics, also called saturable kinetics.

If the enzymes have become saturated, a small ↑ in dose can cause a large ↑ in drug level.

If albumin is low (< 3.5 g/dL) and CrCl ≥ 10 mL/min, adjust the total level with the formula:

$$\text{Phenytoin correction} = \frac{\text{Total phenytoin measured } \dagger}{(0.2 \times \text{albumin}) + 0.1}$$

Free levels do not require correction. See the Pharmacokinetics chapter for more details.

† Use serum phenytoin in mcg/mL and albumin in g/dL

PHENOBARBITAL

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Phenobarbital *(Sezaby)* C-IV Tablet, elixir, injection *Sezaby* – injectable formulation for neonatal seizures (preservative free)	**Initial:** 50-100 mg BID or TID **Therapeutic range:** 10-40 mcg/mL (adults) 15-40 mcg/mL (children)	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Severe hepatic impairment, dyspnea or airway obstruction, previous addiction to sedative-hypnotics, intraarterial administration **WARNINGS** Substance use disorder (potential for drug dependency), fetal harm, respiratory depression, paradoxical reaction (e.g., hyperactive or aggressive behavior) in acute pain or children, ↓ BP when given IV, serious skin reactions (SJS/TEN) **SIDE EFFECTS** Physiological dependence, tolerance, residual sedation, somnolence, cognitive impairment, dizziness, ataxia, depression, folate deficiency **MONITORING** LFTs, CBC with differential **NOTES** Primidone is a prodrug of phenobarbital; both are barbiturates

PHENOBARBITAL DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Phenobarbital and primidone are strong inducers of several enzymes, including CYP3A4 and P-gp. They can ↓ the level of drugs metabolized by these enzymes, such as other ASMs.
- Phenobarbital and primidone can significantly ↓ hormonal contraceptive levels. Use of an alternative, non-hormonal contraceptive is recommended.

ASM COUSINS

Some ASMs have "family members" with similar side effects and safety considerations.

- Carbamazepine, oxcarbazepine and eslicarbazepine
  - Hyponatremia, rash, enzyme induction
- Gabapentin and pregabalin
  - Weight gain, peripheral edema, mild euphoria
  - Used primarily for neuropathic pain
- Phenobarbital and primidone
  - Sedation, dependence/tolerance, enzyme induction
- Topiramate and zonisamide
  - Weight loss, metabolic acidosis, nephrolithiasis
  - Oligohidrosis/hyperthermia (in children)

OTHER ANTISEIZURE MEDICATIONS

DRUG	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Benzodiazepines, including: Lorazepam *(Ativan)* Clobazam *(Onfi, Sympazan)* Diazepam *(Diastat AcuDial*, Valtoco)* Midazolam *(Nayzilam)* Tablet, suspension, oral film, nasal spray, rectal gel C-IV	**BOXED WARNINGS** Use with opioids can result in profound sedation, respiratory depression and death **WARNINGS** Serious skin reactions (SJS/TEN), paradoxical reactions including hyperactive or aggressive behavior, anterograde amnesia **NOTES** Clobazam is used for Lennox-Gastaut syndrome or refractory epilepsy; all others are used to stop an active seizure Causes physiological dependence, tolerance, drooling, pyrexia, nasal/throat irritation (nasal formulations)
Brivaracetam *(Briviact)* Tablet, oral solution, injection C-V	**WARNINGS** Behavioral reactions including psychotic symptoms, irritability, depression, aggressive behavior and anxiety; bronchospasm and angioedema **MONITORING** Somnolence and fatigue, caution driving or operating machinery **NOTES** No added therapeutic benefit when used in combination with levetiracetam
Cannabidiol *(Epidiolex)* Oral solution	**WARNINGS** Somnolence and sedation (risk is ↑ when used with clobazam); hepatotoxicity (monitor LFTs), risk is ↑ when used with valproic acid or clobazam **NOTES** For Lennox-Gastaut syndrome, Dravet syndrome or tuberous sclerosis complex; can ↓ appetite
Cenobamate *(Xcopri)* Tablet C-V	**WARNINGS** Multiorgan hypersensitivity reactions (DRESS), shortening of the QT interval, somnolence, gait disturbance, visual changes (diplopia, blurred vision) **MONITORING** Eye exam, serum K (can become elevated)
Eslicarbazepine *(Aptiom)* Tablet Active metabolite of oxcarbazepine	**NOTES** Same warnings/side effects as oxcarbazepine including ↓ Na (monitor) plus a warning for drug-induced liver injury (monitor LFTs) Inducer of CYP3A4 (moderate)
Ethosuximide *(Zarontin)* Capsule, oral solution Used for absence seizures	**WARNINGS** Serious skin rash (SJS/TEN), blood dyscrasias, multiorgan hypersensitivity reactions (DRESS) **SIDE EFFECTS** N/V, abdominal pain, weight loss, hiccups, dizziness, somnolence **MONITORING** LFTs, CBC with differential, urinalysis, platelets, signs of rash, trough serum concentration

DRUG	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Felbamate *(Felbatol)* Tablet, oral suspension	**BOXED WARNINGS** Aplastic anemia, hepatic failure **MONITORING** LFTs, CBC, serum levels of other ASMs **NOTES** Informed consent needs to be signed by patient and prescriber prior to dispensing
Fenfluramine *(Fintepla)* Oral solution	**BOXED WARNING** Valvular heart disease, pulmonary hypertension (available only through a restricted distribution program/REMS) **WARNINGS** ↓ appetite/weight loss, serotonin syndrome (contraindicated with MAO inhibitors), ↑ BP, angle-closure glaucoma **MONITORING** Echocardiogram required before, during and after treatment, weight, BP
Gabapentin ***(Neurontin)*** Capsule, tablet, oral solution, oral suspension *Gralise* – postherpetic neuralgia (PHN) *Horizant* (gabapentin enacarbil) – PHN and restless legs syndrome	**WARNINGS** Angioedema **SIDE EFFECTS** Dizziness, somnolence, peripheral edema, weight gain, ataxia, diplopia, blurred vision, dry mouth, mild euphoria **MONITORING** Edema/weight gain **NOTES** Often used for neuropathic pain treatment See the Pain chapter for more details
Perampanel *(Fycompa)* Tablet, oral suspension C-III	**BOXED WARNING** Neuropsychiatric events (dose-related) including irritability, aggression, anger and paranoia, mainly in the first 6 weeks **NOTES** Substrate of CYP3A4 (major)
Pregabalin ***(Lyrica)*** C-V	**NOTES** Warnings, side effects and monitoring are the same as gabapentin Also used for diabetic or spinal cord injury neuropathic pain, PHN and fibromyalgia See the Pain chapter for more details
Primidone *(Mysoline)*	**NOTES** Prodrug of phenobarbital and phenylethylmalonamide (PEMA) – both are active metabolites See phenobarbital drug table for more details
Rufinamide *(Banzel)* Tablet, oral suspension	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Patients with familial short QT syndrome due to QT shortening (dose-related) **NOTES** Take with food

DRUG	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Stiripentol *(Diacomit)* Capsule, oral suspension	**WARNINGS** Loss of appetite, weight loss, delirium/hallucinations (rare) **MONITORING** CBC and hepatic function, weight, mood **NOTES** To be taken with clobazam to treat seizures associated with Dravet syndrome
Tiagabine *(Gabitril)* Tablet	**WARNINGS** Worsening of seizures/new-onset seizures when used off-label for other indications, serious skin reactions (SJS/TEN) **NOTES** Take with food
Vigabatrin *(Sabril, Vigadrone)* Tablet, packet for solution	**BOXED WARNING** Causes permanent vision loss (≥ 30% of patients) **MONITORING** Eye exam at baseline, every 3 months during therapy and 3-6 months after discontinuation **NOTES** Only available through a restricted program called the Vigabatrin REMS Program
Zonisamide *(Zonegran, Zonisade)* Capsule, oral suspension	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Hypersensitivity to sulfonamides **WARNINGS** Same as topiramate except no hyperammonemia warning and there is a risk of serious skin reactions (SJS/TEN); multiorgan hypersensitivity reactions (DRESS) **SIDE EFFECTS** Similar to topiramate, including oligohidrosis/hyperthermia (typically in children) and nephrolithiasis

**Brand discontinued but name still used in practice.*

MONITORING

All ASMs require monitoring of seizure frequency (to ensure efficacy) and adverse effects. Some ASMs (e.g., phenytoin, valproic acid, carbamazepine, phenobarbital) also have therapeutic drug level ranges that are monitored. Drug levels are obtained when treatment is started, at dose adjustments, with suspected toxicity and to monitor adherence.

DRUG INTERACTIONS

ASMs can cause drug interactions through protein binding or enzyme-mediated effects. Some ASMs are highly protein-bound (e.g., phenytoin, valproate, clobazam) and can interact with other protein-bound drugs by displacing them from protein binding sites; this creates more free (unbound) drug and increases the risk of toxicity. Some ASMs induce or inhibit enzymes responsible for drug metabolism (e.g., CYP, UGT) or transporter proteins (e.g., P-glycoprotein).

Many ASMs are enzyme inducers and lower the concentration of other medcations, including other ASMs (see Study Tip Gal below).

Valproic acid is an enzyme inhibitor that increases the levels of substrates, such as lamotrigine. Higher lamotrigine levels increase the risk of severe rash; dose adjustments are required when using valproic acid and lamotrigine together to decrease this risk.

SELECT ASMs WITH ENZYME INDUCTION OR INHIBITION

Enzyme Inducers
- Carbamazepine
- Oxcarbazepine
- Phenytoin
- Fosphenytoin
- Phenobarbital
- Primidone

Enzyme Inhibitor
- Valproic acid (↑ lamotrigine)

SPECIAL POPULATIONS

USE IN PREGNANCY

Several older ASMs (e.g., clonazepam, phenobarbital, primidone, phenytoin, fosphenytoin, carbamazepine, valproic acid) have known teratogenic risk. Valproic acid has the highest risk, causing neural tube defects and impaired cognitive function (decreased IQ). Levetiracetam has the lowest risk and is preferred in pregnancy; lamotrigine also has a low risk and can be considered during pregnancy. The risk profiles of newer ASMs are not well defined.

Congenital malformations occur more commonly in children exposed to ASMs *in utero* and include cardiac defects, urogenital defects and neural tube defects. Neural tube defects occur most commonly in children born to mothers taking carbamazepine or valproic acid. Females of childbearing age on ASMs should receive daily folate supplementation.

Females of childbearing age on ASMs should avoid unplanned pregnancy. Pre-pregnancy counseling can ensure that a plan is in place to maintain seizure control. Many ASMs reduce the efficacy of oral hormonal contraceptives and require the use of non-hormonal contraceptives while on treatment (see the Contraception & Infertility chapter).

ASMs contribute to bone loss. During pregnancy, higher than normal calcium is needed for fetal bone growth. Adequate calcium and vitamin D supplementation is required for pregnant patients taking an ASM.

Blood levels of ASMs can change throughout pregnancy and postpartum. ASM levels decline during pregnancy, with some being more affected than others. Low ASM levels can lead to seizures, which can be harmful to the baby; dose increases may be needed. In the postpartum period, ASM levels increase, and decreased doses are commonly needed. Monitoring ASM levels during the postpartum period is required.

USE IN CHILDREN

In addition to cognitive impairment and coordination difficulty, there are drug-specific risks in children taking ASMs. Topiramate and zonisamide can cause reduced sweating (i.e., hypohidrosis) in young children. This means that sun exposure should be limited to minimize the risk of hyperthermia. Lamotrigine-induced rash with risk of fatality occurs more commonly in children.

Administering medications to children can be difficult as many are unable to swallow tablets and capsules. ASMs used in children often come in formulations that are easy to swallow (e.g., lamotrigine ODT or chewable tablets, levetiracetam ODT or oral solutions).

KEY COUNSELING POINTS

See the Drug Formulations and Patient Counseling chapter for counseling language/layman's terminology.

ALL ANTISEIZURE MEDICATIONS

- Can cause:
  - ☐ Suicidal thoughts or behaviors.
  - ☐ Drowsiness.
- Seizures can become worse if the drug is suddenly stopped. The dose must be gradually decreased.
- Many drug interactions, including drugs that worsen drowsiness (e.g., benzodiazepines, opioids) and drugs that lower the seizure threshold.
- Supplement with calcium and vitamin D while taking this medication.

CARBAMAZEPINE

- Can cause:
  - ☐ Severe rash.
  - ☐ Rare but serious blood disorders. You will need to have your blood checked while on this drug.
- Avoid in pregnancy (teratogenic).

LAMOTRIGINE

- Can cause:
  - ☐ Severe rash (most likely in first 2 to 8 weeks).
- Chewable tablets can be swallowed whole, chewed or mixed in water or diluted juice. If mixed, drink the whole amount right away.

OXCARBAZEPINE

- Can cause:
  - ☐ Low sodium levels. Contact your provider if you have fatigue, headache, nausea or confusion.
  - ☐ Severe rash.
- Take extended-release on an empty stomach at least 1 hour before or 2 hours after food.
- Shake oral suspension for 10 seconds before using. It can be mixed in a small glass of water.

PHENYTOIN

- Can cause:
  - ☐ Severe rash.
  - ☐ Gingival hyperplasia.
  - ☐ Changes in vision (e.g., double vision).
  - ☐ Abnormal eye movements.
- Avoid in pregnancy (teratogenic).

TOPIRAMATE

- Can cause:
  - ☐ Problems with concentration, attention, memory or speech.
  - ☐ Eye damage.
  - ☐ Decreased sweating and increased body temperature (especially in children).
  - ☐ Weight loss.
- Sprinkle capsules can be swallowed whole or opened and sprinkled on a teaspoon of soft food. Do not chew. Follow with a glass of water.
- Drink plenty of fluids to prevent kidney stones.
- Avoid in pregnancy (teratogenic).

VALPROIC ACID

- Can cause:
  - ☐ Liver damage.
  - ☐ Weight gain.
- Avoid in pregnancy (teratogenic).
- Take with food to help avoid stomach upset.

PHENOBARBITAL

- Abuse and dependence can occur.
- Avoid in pregnancy (teratogenic).

DIAZEPAM RECTAL GEL

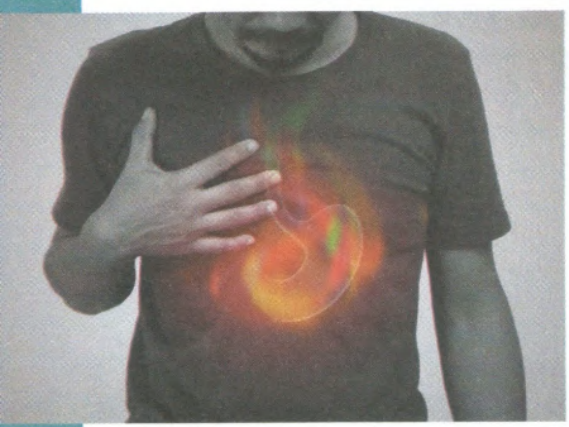
- The green "READY" band should be visible before leaving the pharmacy.
- Administration instructions (detailed administration instructions can be found at https://diastat.com/):
  - ☐ Put the person on their side in a safe location (where they can't fall).
  - ☐ Get medication syringe and lubricating jelly.
  - ☐ Remove syringe cap by pushing up with thumb.
  - ☐ Apply lubricating jelly to syringe tip.
  - ☐ Turn the person on their side facing you and bend upper leg forward to expose the rectum.
  - ☐ Separate buttocks and gently insert syringe tip into the rectum until the rim is snug against the rectal opening.
  - ☐ Slowly count to 3 while gently pushing the plunger until it stops.
  - ☐ Count to 3 before removing syringe from rectum.
  - ☐ Remove the syringe and count to 3 again while holding buttocks together to prevent leakage.
  - ☐ Make note of the time given and observe.
- Call 911 if the seizure continues 15 minutes after giving the medication.
- To dispose of medication remaining in the syringe, remove the plunger from syringe, then replace it. Aim the application tip over the sink or toilet. Push the plunger down to remove any remaining medication in the syringe.

Select Guidelines/References

Evidence-Based Guideline: Treatment of Convulsive Status Epilepticus in Children and Adults: Report of the Guideline Committee of the American Epilepsy Society. *Epilepsy Curr.* 2016;16(1):48-61.

Operational Classification of Seizure Types by the International League Against Epilepsy. 2017 Update. *Epilepsia*. 58(4):522-530.

GASTROINTESTINAL CONDITIONS



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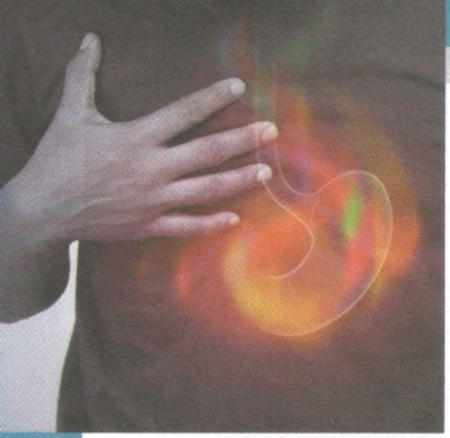

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CHAPTER 71

GASTROESOPHAGEAL REFLUX DISEASE (GERD) & PEPTIC ULCER DISEASE (PUD)

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GASTROESOPHAGEAL REFLUX DISEASE

BACKGROUND

Parietal cells in the epithelial lining of the stomach secrete hydrochloric acid (HCl) through the H^+/K^+-adenosine triphosphatase (ATPase) pump, known as the proton pump. The pump, and secretion of HCl, is stimulated by histamine, acetylcholine and the hormone gastrin, which also stimulates stomach muscle contractions to aid in digestion. Acidic gastric contents are normally prevented from backflow into the esophagus by a protective ring of muscle fibers called the lower esophageal sphincter (LES). Patients with gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) have reduced LES pressure (muscle tone), and acidic gastric contents can backflow into the esophagus.

SCREENING AND DIAGNOSIS

Typical GERD symptoms include heartburn (daytime or nocturnal), hypersalivation and regurgitation of acidic contents into the mouth or throat. Other symptoms include epigastric pain, nausea, cough, sore throat, hoarseness and chest pain, which can be difficult to distinguish from cardiac pain.

Diagnosis is based on symptoms (duration, daytime and/or nocturnal occurrence), frequency (≥ 2 times per week) and risk factors (e.g., family history, diet, eating habits, sleep position); invasive testing is not required when typical symptoms are present.

GERD can decrease quality of life and lead to esophageal erosion, strictures, bleeding and Barrett's esophagus (abnormal cell growth in the esophageal lining which can lead to esophageal cancer). If a patient has alarm symptoms (see Treatment Principles section) or there is concern for a more serious condition, endoscopy can be performed. Patients refractory to GERD treatment may benefit from 24-hour esophageal pH monitoring.

KEY DRUGS THAT CAN WORSEN GERD SYMPTOMS

- Aspirin/NSAIDs
- Bisphosphonates
- Dabigatran
- Estrogen products
- Fish oil
- Iron supplements
- Nicotine replacement therapy
- Steroids
- Tetracyclines

TREATMENT PRINCIPLES

Most patients self-treat GERD symptoms with OTC products and do not seek medical attention unless this fails. Pharmacists (often the first healthcare encounter) should refer patients for further evaluation if they do not respond to lifestyle modifications and/or two weeks of self-treatment with OTC products, or if alarm symptoms are present [e.g., odynophagia (painful swallowing), dysphagia, frequent nausea and vomiting, hematemesis, black or bloody stools, unintentional weight loss].

Infrequent heartburn (< 2 times/week) can be treated with OTC antacids or histamine-2 receptor antagonists (H2RAs) as needed. Treatment for frequent (≥ 2 times/week) or severe GERD symptoms is described in the treatment algorithm below. Vonoprazan, an oral potassium-competitive acid blocker, is an alternative option to use of a proton pump inhibitor (PPI) that (due to cost) is typically reserved for patients with severe erosive esophagitis or persistent symptoms despite 8 weeks of maximally-dosed PPI treatment.

GERD Treatment Algorithm

Lifestyle Modifications

- Weight loss (if overweight or recently gained weight)*
- Elevate the head of the bed with foam wedges or blocks
- Avoid eating high fat meals within 2-3 hours of bedtime
- Avoid foods/beverages that trigger reflux (patient-specific): caffeine, chocolate, acidic/spicy foods, carbonated beverages

Initial Drug Treatment

PPI once daily for 8 weeks

- Can increase to twice daily if partial response or if nocturnal symptoms are present

Stop treatment at 8 weeks; if symptoms return, start maintenance therapy

Maintenance Treatment

- 1st line: PPI at the lowest effective dose**
- Alternative: H2RA, if there is no erosive esophagitis and it relieves symptoms
- Not recommended: metoclopramide or sucralfate

*Weight loss has the best evidence for improvement of symptoms.
**Can include intermittent or on-demand dosing (see PPI section of text).

DRUG TREATMENT

ANTACIDS

Antacids neutralize gastric acid, which increases gastric pH. Since antacids do not require systemic absorption, they provide relief within minutes, but the duration of relief is short (30 – 60 minutes). Antacids are available OTC in many formulations (e.g., suspensions, chewable tablets) and are suitable for mild, infrequent symptoms.

DRUG	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Calcium carbonate *(Tums,* others) **+ magnesium *(Mylanta Supreme,* others)** **+ simethicone *(Maalox Advanced Maximum Strength,* others)**	**WARNINGS** Aluminum and magnesium: can accumulate with severe renal dysfunction (not recommended if CrCl < 30 mL/min); risk of bleeding with aspirin-containing products **SIDE EFFECTS** Unpleasant taste Calcium: constipation, bloating, belching Aluminum: constipation, hypophosphatemia Magnesium: loose stools (aluminum can counter-balance) **NOTES** Dosing varies by product; many require administration 4-6 times per day Calcium-containing antacids may be preferred in pregnancy (see Drug Use in Pregnancy & Lactation chapter) *Alka-Seltzer* contains > 500 mg Na per tablet which can worsen edema in patients with heart failure or cirrhosis
Magnesium hydroxide *(Milk of Magnesia,* others) + aluminum *(Mag-Al,* others) **+ aluminum + simethicone *(Mylanta Maximum Strength,* others)**	
Sodium bicarbonate/aspirin/ citric acid *(Alka-Seltzer,* others)	

HISTAMINE-2 RECEPTOR ANTAGONISTS

H2RAs reversibly inhibit H2 receptors on gastric parietal cells, which decreases gastric acid secretion. They can be used for infrequent heartburn PRN (though they have a slower onset than antacids) and for GERD maintenance treatment (see GERD Treatment Algorithm on prior page), which can decrease side effects associated with the long-term use of PPIs (see Risks Associated with PPI Therapy later in the chapter).

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Famotidine *(Pepcid AC, Zantac 360,* others) Rx and OTC: tablet, chewable tablet, suspension, injection + calcium carbonate + magnesium hydroxide *(Pepcid Complete)* OTC: chewable tablet + ibuprofen *(Duexis)* Rx: tablet	**OTC** 10-20 mg 1-2 times daily PRN **Rx** 20 mg BID CrCl < 60 mL/min: decrease dose	**WARNINGS** Confusion, usually reversible (risk factors: older adult, severely ill, renal impairment) Vitamin B12 deficiency with prolonged use (≥ 2 years) Famotidine: QT prolongation with renal dysfunction **SIDE EFFECTS** Cimetidine (high doses): gynecomastia, impotence **NOTES** Onset of relief: within 60 minutes; duration: 4-10 hours May be used in pregnancy when clinically indicated Avoid cimetidine due to drug interactions and side effects To relieve symptoms, take PRN; to prevent symptoms, take PRN 30-60 minutes before food/beverages that cause symptoms Tachyphylaxis can occur if used on a scheduled basis
Cimetidine *(Tagamet HB)* Rx and OTC: tablet, oral solution	**OTC** 200 mg 1-2 times daily PRN **Rx** 400 mg Q6H	
Nizatidine Rx: capsule	150 mg BID	

PROTON PUMP INHIBITORS

PPIs irreversibly inhibit the gastric H+/K+-ATPase pump (the proton pump) in parietal cells, which blocks gastric acid secretion. An eight-week course of treatment is recommended first line for GERD to relieve symptoms and heal erosions. All PPIs have similar efficacy, although an individual may respond better to one drug in the class versus another.

If used long-term for maintenance treatment, the lowest effective dose should be used and the need for treatment should be assessed regularly. Intermittent use (PPI taken for a short time after relapse of GERD symptoms) and on-demand use (PPI taken only when symptoms occur) are additional options.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Dexlansoprazole *(Dexilant)* Rx: capsule	**Rx** 30-60 mg daily	**WARNINGS** *C. difficile*-associated diarrhea (CDAD) Hypomagnesemia Vitamin B12 deficiency with prolonged use (≥ 2 years) Osteoporosis-related bone fractures with ↑ doses or long-term use (≥ 1 year) Acute interstitial nephritis (hypersensitivity reaction), cutaneous and systemic lupus erythematosus PPIs may diminish the therapeutic effect of clopidogrel, do not use omeprazole and esomeprazole while taking clopidogrel; rabeprazole or pantoprazole have less risk **SIDE EFFECTS** Well-tolerated; headache, abdominal pain, nausea, diarrhea **NOTES** Onset: 1-3 hours; duration > 24 hrs for most PPIs May be used in pregnancy when clinically indicated Pantoprazole and esomeprazole are the only PPIs available IV Do not crush, cut, or chew tablets or capsules Capsules can be opened (not crushed), mixed in applesauce and swallowed immediately (without chewing) *Zegerid* 20 mg and 40 mg have the same Na bicarbonate content (1,100 mg); do not substitute two 20 mg capsules or packets for one 40 mg capsule/packet because the patient will receive twice the amount of Na; use caution in patients on Na-restricted diet (e.g., heart failure, cirrhosis) Suspension compounding kits are available that contain pre-measured powdered drug, suspension liquid (with flavoring) and mixing tools
Esomeprazole *(Nexium, Nexium 24HR, Nexium I.V.,* others) Rx and OTC: capsule, tablet, injection, packet for oral suspension **+ naproxen *(Vimovo)*** Rx: tablet	**OTC** 20 mg daily **Rx** 20-40 mg daily	
Lansoprazole *(Prevacid, Prevacid 24HR, Prevacid SoluTab,* others) Rx and OTC: capsule, ODT	**OTC** 15 mg daily **Rx** 15-30 mg daily	
Omeprazole *(Prilosec, Prilosec OTC)* Rx and OTC: capsule, tablet, packet for oral suspension, ODT + sodium bicarbonate *(Konvomep, Zegerid)* Rx and OTC: capsule, packet for oral suspension Rx: tablet	**OTC** 20 mg daily **Rx** 20-40 mg daily	
Pantoprazole *(Protonix)* Rx: tablet, injection, packet for oral suspension	**Rx** 40 mg daily	
Rabeprazole *(Aciphex)* Rx: tablet, capsule sprinkle	**Rx** 20 mg daily	

Recommended Administration of Oral PPIs

DRUG	MEAL	TIMING
Esomeprazole *(Nexium)*	Before breakfast	At least 60 minutes before
Lansoprazole *(Prevacid, Prevacid SoluTab)*		Time not specified
Omeprazole *(Prilosec)*		Time not specified
Omeprazole + sodium bicarbonate *(Zegerid)*		60 minutes before (if nocturnal symptoms, give at bedtime)
Dexlansoprazole *(Dexilant)*	Formulation-specific	Without regard to meals
Pantoprazole *(Protonix)*		Tablet: without regard to meals Oral suspension: 30 minutes before a meal
Rabeprazole *(Aciphex)*		Tablet: without regard to meals Capsule sprinkles: 30 minutes before meal

RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH PPI THERAPY

The long-term use of PPIs causes chronic changes in gastric pH. This can promote the growth of microorganisms and increase the risk of GI infections, including *C. difficile*, and possibly pneumonia (due to reflux of gastric contents beyond the oral cavity). PPIs also increase the risk of osteoporosis and fractures. The Beers Criteria recommend that PPIs not be used beyond eight weeks in older adults unless there is a clear indication (e.g., high risk for GI bleed due to chronic NSAID use, demonstrated need for maintenance treatment).

H2RA AND PPI FORMULATIONS TO KNOW

H2RAs and PPIs are commonly used medications. Sometimes suspensions, solutions or ODT formulations are needed (e.g., infants, children, adults unable to swallow tablets/capsules). Non-oral formulations are used when patients are NPO.

	OTC	ODT	ORAL SOLUTION/ SUSPENSION	INJECTION
H2RA	Cimetidine Famotidine		Cimetidine Famotidine	Famotidine
PPI	Esomeprazole Lansoprazole Omeprazole	Lansoprazole Omeprazole	**Packets for suspension:** Esomeprazole Omeprazole Pantoprazole	Esomeprazole Pantoprazole

METOCLOPRAMIDE AND OTHER MEDICATIONS

Other medications historically used for GERD treatment include the cytoprotective drugs, misoprostol and sucralfate, and the prokinetic drug, metoclopramide. However, these medications are not recommended by guidelines. Misoprostol and sucralfate can be used for peptic ulcer disease (discussed later in the chapter). Metoclopramide is most commonly used for patients with coexisting gastroparesis.

Metoclopramide is a dopamine antagonist. At higher doses, it blocks serotonin receptors in the chemoreceptor zone of the CNS which helps nausea and vomiting (see the Oncology chapter). Metoclopramide enhances the response to acetylcholine in the upper GI tract, causing increased motility, accelerated gastric emptying (peristaltic speed) and ↑ LES tone.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Metoclopramide ***(Reglan, Gimoti)*** Tablet, ODT, oral solution, injection, nasal solution	10-15 mg QID 30 min before meals and at bedtime Short duration of action (food must be present in gut) Not recommended for use > 12 weeks CrCl < 60 mL/min: ↓ dose 50% (to avoid side effects, including CNS effects/EPS)	**BOXED WARNING** Tardive dyskinesia (a serious movement disorder, often irreversible); ↑ risk with high doses, long-term treatment (> 12 weeks) and use in older adults **CONTRAINDICATIONS** GI obstruction, perforation or hemorrhage, seizure history, use with other drugs likely to cause extrapyramidal symptoms (EPS), pheochromocytoma **WARNINGS** EPS (including acute dystonia), parkinsonian-like symptoms, rare neuroleptic malignant syndrome (NMS), depression, suicidal ideation Avoid in patients with Parkinson disease **SIDE EFFECTS** Drowsiness, restlessness, fatigue, hypertension, diarrhea

DRUG INTERACTIONS

This section highlights the most important interactions for antacids, H2RAs and PPIs, but it is not all-inclusive. As appropriate, refer to other chapters (e.g., HIV, Hepatitis & Liver Disease, Infectious Diseases).

ANTACIDS, H2RAs AND PPIs

- Some drugs require an acidic gut for absorption (e.g., enteric-coated or delayed-release products can release drug prematurely if the gastric pH is increased). The Key Drugs Guy lists drugs with decreased absorption when given concurrently with antacids, H2RAs and PPIs.
  - ☐ Due to the short duration of action of antacids, this type of interaction can often be avoided by separating administration of the interacting drugs (see Antacids section below).
  - ☐ The following should be avoided in combination with an H2RA or PPI: dasatinib, pazopanib and delayed-release risedronate. Erlotinib, rilpivirine, velpatasvir and ledipasvir should generally be avoided in combination with PPIs.

ANTACIDS

- Antacids can decrease the absorption of some drugs by binding or adsorbing to them. It is necessary to separate administration of antacids from select drugs (see Key Drugs Guy). Although timing varies, antacids should generally be avoided for 2 – 4 hours before and 2 – 6 hours after administration of these drugs.

KEY DRUGS WITH DECREASED ABSORPTION

Drugs that require an acidic gut (absorption ↓ by antacids, H2RAs and PPIs)

- Antiretrovirals: rilpivirine (NNRTI), atazanavir (PI)
- Azole antifungals: *Sporanox* (itraconazole capsules), ketoconazole, posaconazole oral suspension*
- Cephalosporins (oral): cefpodoxime, cefuroxime
- Direct-acting antivirals: ledipasvir, velpatasvir
- Iron products
- Risedronate delayed-release

Oral drugs/drug classes that antacids bind

- INSTIs: bictegravir, dolutegravir, elvitegravir, raltegravir
- Bisphosphonates
- Isoniazid
- Levothyroxine
- Mycophenolate
- Quinolones
- Sotalol
- Steroids (especially budesonide)
- Tetracyclines

NNRTI = non-nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitor, PI = protease inhibitor, INSTI = integrase strand transfer inhibitor
**Absorption decreased by H2RAs and PPIs only.*

H2RAs

- Use caution with CNS depressants (especially in older adults) due to the risk of additive delirium, dementia and cognitive impairment. Use lower doses in patients with renal impairment.
- Cimetidine is an inhibitor of CYP450 enzymes (e.g., CYP2C19, CYP3A4, CYP1A2). Avoid use with dofetilide and use caution with other drugs, including amiodarone, calcium channel blockers, clopidogrel, phenytoin, SSRIs, theophylline and warfarin.

PPIs

- All PPIs inhibit CYP2C19; most are weak inhibitors but omeprazole and esomeprazole are moderate inhibitors that can decrease the effectiveness of clopidogrel (a prodrug). Do not use these drugs together.

METOCLOPRAMIDE

- Do not use in patients receiving medications for Parkinson disease (can worsen symptoms) or in combination with antipsychotic drugs or promethazine (due to an additive risk of EPS).

PEPTIC ULCER DISEASE

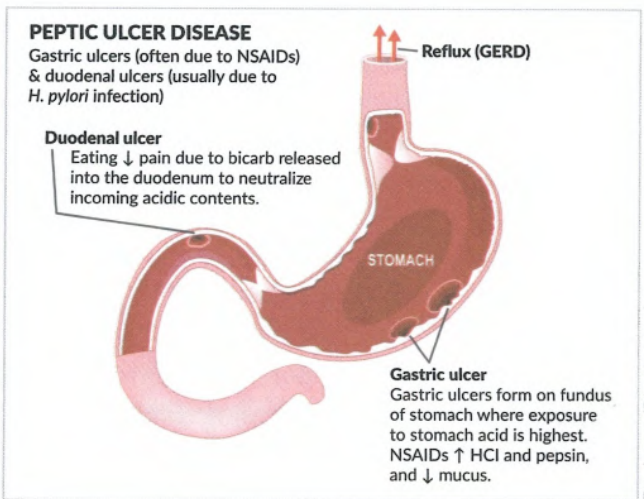
BACKGROUND

Under normal conditions, a physiologic balance exists between gastric acid secretion and the gut's mucosal defense and repair mechanisms, which include mucus and bicarbonate secretion, mucosal blood flow, prostaglandin synthesis, cellular regeneration and epithelial cell renewal.

Peptic ulcer disease (PUD) occurs when there is mucosal erosion within the gastrointestinal tract. The three most common causes are *Helicobacter pylori (H. pylori)*, a spiral-shaped, gram-negative bacterium that lives in the acidic environment of the stomach, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) and stress ulcers, which occur in critically ill and mechanically-ventilated patients (see the Acute & Critical Care Medicine chapter). Less common causes include hypersecretory states (e.g., ↑ gastric acid in Zollinger-Ellison syndrome), viral infections (e.g., cytomegalovirus), radiation therapy and infiltrative diseases (e.g., Crohn's Disease). Ulcers can be observed with a gastrointestinal upper endoscopy.

SYMPTOMS

The primary symptom of PUD is dyspepsia, a gastric pain that can feel like a gnawing or burning sensation in the middle or upper stomach. If the ulcer is duodenal (usually caused by *H. pylori)*, pain is typically worse 2 – 3 hours after eating (when the stomach is empty); food or antacids lessen the pain. With gastric ulcers (primarily from NSAIDs), eating generally worsens the pain. Other symptoms include heartburn, belching, bloating, cramping, nausea and anorexia.



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H. PYLORI DETECTION AND MANAGEMENT

DIAGNOSTIC TESTS

Common, non-invasive, diagnostic tests for *H. pylori* include the urea breath test (UBT), which detects gas (CO_2) produced by the bacteria, and the fecal antigen test, which detects *H. pylori* in the stool. To avoid false-negative results, PPIs should be discontinued two weeks prior to these tests, and bismuth and antibiotics should be discontinued 4 weeks prior.

All patients who test positive should be treated to avoid long-term complications (e.g., gastric cancer).

DRUG TREATMENT

There are several regimens available to treat *H. pylori* (see table below) that combine acid-suppressive drugs and antibiotics. Drug substitutions should not be made in *H. pylori* eradication regimens. H2RAs should not be used in place of a PPI and other antibiotics within a class should not be substituted (for example, do not use doxycycline instead of tetracycline). The treatment duration for all regimens is 14 days.

First-Line *H. pylori* Treatment Regimens

DRUG REGIMEN	NOTES
Bismuth Quadruple Therapy Preferred for most patients and the only suitable option for patients with a true penicillin allergy	
Bismuth subsalicylate 300 mg QID + **Metronidazole 500 mg TID or QID +** **Tetracycline 500 mg QID +** **PPI BID** Tinidazole may be substituted for metronidazole	3-in-1 combination products (must be combined with a PPI): *Pylera** (bismuth subcitrate 140 mg + metronidazole 125 mg + tetracycline 125 mg per capsule) 3 capsules QID + PPI BID *Helidac* [bismuth subsalicylate 525 mg (2 chewable tablets) + metronidazole 250 mg tablets + tetracycline 500 mg capsules] QID + PPI BID **Alcohol Use** Do not use metronidazole **Pregnancy/Children** Do not use tetracycline during pregnancy or in children age < 8 years **Salicylate Allergy** Do not use bismuth subsalicylate
Rifabutin Triple Therapy An alternative option in patients without a penicillin allergy**	
Amoxicillin 1,000 mg TID + **Rifabutin 50 mg TID +** **Omeprazole 40 mg TID**	3-in-1 combination product: *Talicia* (amoxicillin 250 mg + rifabutin 12.5 mg + omeprazole 10 mg per capsule) 4 capsules TID
Potassium-Competitive Acid Blocker Dual Therapy An alternative option in patients without a penicillin allergy**	
Amoxicillin 1,000 mg TID + Vonoprazan 20 mg BID	2-in-1 combination product: *Voquezna DualPak* (contains 14 daily blister cards with two vonoprazan 20 mg tablets and six amoxicillin 500 mg capsules)

**Available only as a 10-day supply.*

***Patients with a penicillin allergy that cannot use bismuth quadruple therapy should undergo allergy testing to confirm a true allergy and, if positive, penicillin desensitization should be considered.*

Other *H. pylori* Treatments

Due to rising rates of resistance, use of *H. pylori* treatment regimens containing clarithromycin and levofloxacin should be limited to select patients. *Voquezna TriplePak* (amoxicillin + clarithromycin + vonoprazan) is an alternative option for treatment-naïve patients that is ideally reserved for those with a confirmed clarithromycin-sensitive *H. pylori* strain per susceptibility testing. Levofloxacin-based therapy (amoxicillin + metronidazole + levofloxacin + PPI) should only be considered for treatment-experienced patients with persistent infection that is confirmed to be susceptible to levofloxacin.

NON-STEROIDAL ANTI-INFLAMMATORY DRUG-INDUCED ULCERS

BACKGROUND

NSAIDs, including aspirin, can cause mucosal damage by two mechanisms: direct irritation of the gastric epithelium and systemic inhibition of prostaglandin synthesis (by inhibiting COX-1). The chronic use of NSAIDs increases the risk for gastric ulcers. Additional risk factors are shown in the box to the right.

RISK FACTORS FOR NSAID-INDUCED ULCERS

Age > 60 years

History of PUD (including *H. pylori*-induced)

High-dose NSAIDs

Using > 1 NSAID (e.g., ibuprofen plus aspirin)

Use of anticoagulants, steroids, SSRIs or SNRIs

PREVENTION AND TREATMENT

When selecting an NSAID, it is important to weigh the risks for GI ulcers and bleeding with the risks for cardiovascular and renal disease (all NSAIDs increase blood pressure and decrease renal blood flow). NSAIDs with COX-2 selective inhibition (e.g., celecoxib) have lower GI risk but higher CV risk compared to non-selective NSAIDs. Other NSAIDs with increased COX-2 selectivity include meloxicam, nabumetone, diclofenac and etodolac.

If possible, both non-selective NSAIDs and COX-2 selective drugs should be avoided in patients with high GI and high CV risk. Naproxen may be the preferred NSAID in patients with low-moderate GI risk and high CV risk.

Patients with high GI risk who require a non-selective NSAID (e.g., for osteoarthritis or rheumatoid arthritis symptom relief) can use a PPI to decrease the risk of ulcers and bleeding, but the long-term risks need to be considered (see Risks of PPI Therapy earlier in the chapter). The cytoprotective drug, misoprostol, is an alternative to a PPI, but its side effects and dosing four times daily limit its use.

Combination products to reduce the risk of NSAID-induced ulcers include naproxen/esomeprazole, ibuprofen/famotidine and diclofenac/misoprostol.

If an ulcer develops, it should be treated with a PPI for eight weeks, and the NSAID should be discontinued. If PPIs cannot be used, high-dose H2RAs or sucralfate are other options.

CYTOPROTECTIVE DRUGS

Misoprostol is a prostaglandin E1 analog that replaces the gastroprotective prostaglandins inhibited by NSAIDs. Sucralfate is a sucrose-sulfate-aluminum complex and forms a physical barrier over an open ulcer. This protects the ulcer from further insult by HCl, pepsin and bile, and allows it to heal.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Misoprostol *(Cytotec)* **+ diclofenac** ***(Arthrotec)***	200 mcg PO QID with food; if not tolerated, may ↓ to 100 mcg QID; take with meals and at bedtime	**BOXED WARNING** Abortifacient, do not use to ↓ NSAID-induced ulcers in females of childbearing potential unless effective contraceptive is used; do not to give this drug to others *Arthrotec:* diclofenac ↑ risk of GI (e.g., bleeding, ulceration) and CV events (e.g., MI) **SIDE EFFECTS** Diarrhea, abdominal pain **NOTES** Use of psyllium can help decrease diarrhea
Sucralfate ***(Carafate)*** Tablet, suspension	1 gram PO QID before meals (empty stomach) and at bedtime	**WARNING** Renal impairment; sucralfate is in an aluminum complex and can accumulate **SIDE EFFECTS** Constipation **NOTES** Binding interactions (separate most drugs 2 hrs before or 4 hrs after)

KEY COUNSELING POINTS

See the Drug Formulations and Patient Counseling chapter for counseling language/layman's terminology.

ANTACIDS, H2RAs AND PPIs

- Seek urgent care if you have trouble or pain when swallowing, bloody stools or vomit with blood or material that looks like coffee grounds.
- Drug interactions due to binding and ↑ gastric pH.

ANTACIDS

- Antacids with aspirin can cause bleeding.

H2RAs

- Can cause confusion, dizziness or memory loss in older adults, especially those with kidney disease.

PPIs

- Can increase the risk of bone fractures, especially if taking longer than a year. Supplemental calcium and vitamin D may be needed. Calcium citrate is the preferred calcium supplement.

Prevacid SoluTab

- Contains phenylalanine. Do not use if you have phenylketonuria (PKU).

METOCLOPRAMIDE

- Can cause drowsiness.
- Can cause unusual body movements. Contact your healthcare provider immediately if you have symptoms that include shakiness, stiffness or uncontrollable movements of the mouth, tongue, cheeks, jaw, arms or legs.

H. PYLORI TREATMENTS

- Some components can cause:
  - ☐ Allergy/anaphylaxis (antibiotics).
  - ☐ Bleeding, bruising, dark tongue and stool (bismuth subsalicylate).
  - ☐ Diarrhea (antibiotics).
  - ☐ Bad taste in the mouth (metronidazole).
- If treatment includes metronidazole, avoid alcohol during treatment and for at least three days after stopping, as you may have headaches, flushing, cramps and an upset stomach.

Select Guidelines/References

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CHAPTER 72

CONSTIPATION & DIARRHEA

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= Study Tip Gal = Key Drugs Guy

CONSTIPATION

BACKGROUND

Constipation is defined as infrequent bowel movements (less than three per week) or difficulty passing stools (e.g., straining, lumpy/hard stools, pushing for more than 10 minutes, stool requiring digital evacuation, the sensation of incomplete evacuation). Constipation can be caused by diet, lifestyle, drugs (see Key Drugs Guy), pregnancy, GI disorders and medical conditions (see box below).

When constipation persists for several weeks or longer and the cause is unknown, it is termed chronic idiopathic constipation (CIC). Patients with CIC should be screened for alarm symptoms, such as weight loss or gastrointestinal bleeding, prior to starting treatment. If alarm symptoms are present, diagnostic testing should occur. Idiopathic constipation associated with chronic or recurrent abdominal discomfort that is relieved by defecation is termed irritable bowel syndrome with constipation (IBS-C).

MEDICAL CONDITIONS THAT CAN CAUSE CONSTIPATION

- Irritable bowel syndrome (constipation-predominant)
- Anal disorders (fissures, fistulae, rectal prolapse)
- Multiple sclerosis
- Cerebrovascular events
- Parkinson disease
- Pregnancy
- Spinal cord tumors
- Diabetes
- Hypothyroidism

DRUGS THAT ARE CONSTIPATING

KEY DRUGS

Antidiarrheals

Anticholinergic drugs
Antihistamines (e.g., diphenhydramine)

Antispasmodics (e.g., baclofen)

Phenothiazines (e.g., prochlorperazine)

TCAs (e.g., amitriptyline)

Incontinence drugs (e.g., oxybutynin)

Cation-containing drugs
Antacids with aluminum or calcium

Iron

Sucralfate

Colesevelam

Opioids

Select antihypertensives
Clonidine

Non-DHP calcium channel blockers (especially verapamil)

Others:

5-HT3 receptor antagonists (e.g., ondansetron)

Antipsychotics (esp. clozapine)

Milnacipran

Phentermine/topiramate

Ranolazine

Tramadol, tapentadol

Varenicline

NON-DRUG TREATMENT

Non-drug treatments are preferred for constipation. These include increasing fluid intake (64 oz daily recommended), limiting caffeine and alcohol intake (to avoid dehydration) and increasing physical activity. Replacing refined foods with whole grain products, bran, fruits, vegetables, beans and other foods high in fiber can prevent constipation. Drugs that are constipating should be discontinued, if possible. Using the bathroom as soon as the urge to defecate arises can be helpful. For young children, a scheduled bathroom time may be needed.

DRUG TREATMENT

If constipation does not improve with lifestyle modifications, or if a constipating drug cannot be stopped, one or more drug treatments can be used. Most medications are available OTC and can be tried for the initial treatment of IBS-C, CIC or opioid-induced constipation (OIC). If constipation is not improved after seven days of OTC treatment, a healthcare provider should be consulted and, if appropriate, prescription medication can be considered.

Most drug treatments stimulate the muscles of the digestive tract or soften the stool, which results in quicker bowel movements; thus, the most common side effects are diarrhea and abdominal cramping.

- Bulk-forming drugs (e.g., psyllium) and dietary fiber are the first-line treatments in most cases and the treatment of choice in pregnancy. They absorb water in the intestine, which adds bulk to the stool. This increases peristalsis and decreases stool transit time.
- Osmotics [e.g., polyethylene glycol (PEG)] contain large ions or molecules that are poorly absorbed. They draw fluid into the bowel lumen through osmosis, which distends the colon and increases peristalsis. For CIC, these can be given in addition to fiber or as monotherapy.
- Stimulants (e.g., senna, bisacodyl) stimulate neurons in the colon, causing peristaltic activity. Patients who use chronic opioids, all of which are constipating, often require a stimulant laxative, because opioids reduce peristalsis and prolong stool transit time. A stool softener can be given with a stimulant laxative if the stool is hard. If the stool is not hard, but the patient cannot push it out, a stimulant alone is the usual treatment.
- Stool softeners (e.g., docusate) are emollients that reduce the surface tension of the stool, allowing more water to mix with the stool. This softens the fecal mass and makes defecation easier. These are frequently used by patients taking iron supplements, which make the stool hard and compact.
- Lubricants (e.g., mineral oil) coat the bowel and stool with a waterproof film. This keeps moisture in the stool and makes defecation easier.

WHICH OTC TO RECOMMEND FOR CONSTIPATION

Most adults
Fiber

Iron-induced or hard stool
Stool softener (e.g., docusate) or bulk-forming drug

Opioid-induced
Stimulant (e.g., senna, bisacodyl) or osmotic (e.g., polyethylene glycol) laxative

Pregnancy
Fiber

Fast relief needed
Adults: bisacodyl or glycerin (more gentle) suppository
Children: glycerin suppository

If no improvement in 7 days, refer to a healthcare provider.

COMMON DRUGS USED FOR CONSTIPATION

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Bulk-Forming Drugs		
Psyllium *(Metamucil,* others) Capsule, powder OTC	2.5-30 g/day in divided doses	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Fecal impaction and GI obstruction (psyllium) **SIDE EFFECTS** Flatulence, abdominal cramping, bloating, bowel obstruction (if strictures present), choking (if powder forms are not taken with enough liquid) **NOTES** Onset of action 12-72 hrs Adequate fluids are required; use caution if fluid restricted (e.g., heart failure), if difficulty swallowing (e.g., Parkinson disease) or if at risk for fecal impaction (e.g., intestinal ulcerations, stenosis) Calcium is a polyvalent cation; separate calcium polycarbophil from select drugs due to a binding interaction Sugar-free options available Psyllium modestly improves cholesterol and blood glucose levels
Calcium polycarbophil *(FiberCon,* others) Caplet, chewable tablet OTC	1,250 mg 1-4 times/day	
Methylcellulose *(Citrucel,* others) Caplet, powder OTC	1-6 g/day	
Wheat dextrin *(Benefiber)* Tablet, chewable tablet, powder OTC	4 g (2 teaspoons) in 4-8 oz of liquid or soft food TID	

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Osmotics		
Magnesium hydroxide *(Milk of Magnesia,* others), magnesium citrate, magnesium sulfate Chewable tablet, suspension OTC	Magnesium hydroxide: 2.4-4.8 g QHS or in divided doses	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Anuria (sorbitol), low galactose diet (lactulose), GI obstruction *(MiraLax)* **SIDE EFFECTS** Electrolyte imbalance, abdominal cramping, abdominal distention, flatulence, dehydration, rectal irritation (suppository) **NOTES** Onset of action 0.5-96 hrs (PO), 5-30 mins (PR) Magnesium-containing products: caution with renal impairment and do not use if severe renal impairment Lactulose: used for hepatic encephalopathy Glycerin suppository used commonly in children who need to defecate quickly
Polyethylene glycol 3350 *(MiraLax,* *GaviLax, GlycoLax,* others) Powder OTC	17 g in 4-8 oz of water daily	
Glycerin *(Fleet Liquid Glycerin Supp, Pedia-Lax,* others) Suppository: adult & pediatric size OTC	PR: 1 daily	
Lactulose *(Constulose, Enulose, Generlac, Kristalose)* Crystal packet, solution Rx	PO: 10-20 g daily Oral solution can be diluted and given PR	
Sodium phosphates *(Fleet Enema,* others) Enema OTC	PR: insert contents of one 4.5 oz enema as a single dose	
Sorbitol Enema, oral solution OTC	PO: 30-150 mL (70% solution) as a single dose PR (enema): 120 mL (25-30% solution)	
Stimulants		
Senna *(Ex-Lax, Senokot,* others) Tablet, chewable tablet, liquid, syrup OTC **+ docusate *(Senna S, Senokot S,* *Senna Plus,* others)** Tablet OTC	17.2-50 mg daily-BID	**WARNINGS** Avoid use with stomach pain, N/V or a change in bowel movements that lasts > 2 weeks **SIDE EFFECTS** Abdominal cramping, electrolyte imbalance, rectal irritation (suppository) **NOTES** Onset of action 6-12 hrs (PO), 15-60 mins (PR) Take oral products at bedtime to induce a bowel movement the following morning; can give 30 mins after a meal to enhance peristalsis Chronic opioid use often requires a stimulant laxative
Bisacodyl Enteric-coated tablet, suppository ***(Dulcolax,* others)** Enema *(Fleet Bisacodyl,* others) OTC	PO: 5-15 mg daily, do not take within 1 hr of dairy products or antacids PR (suppository, enema): 10 mg daily, cool suppository in the fridge or cold water if too soft to insert	

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Emollients (Stool Softeners)		
Docusate sodium *(Colace,* others), docusate calcium, docusate potassium Capsule, tablet, enema, liquid, syrup OTC **+ senna *(Senna S, Senokot S,*** *Senna Plus,* others) Tablet OTC	Docusate sodium: PO: 50-360 mg daily or in divided doses PR (enema): 283 g/5 mL daily-TID	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Abdominal pain, N/V, use with mineral oil, OTC use > 1 week **SIDE EFFECTS** Abdominal cramping, throat irritation (liquid) **NOTES** Onset of action 12-72 hrs (PO), 2-15 mins (PR) Preferred when straining should be avoided (e.g., postpartum, post-MI, anal fissures) Use when stool is hard or dry Do not take docusate and mineral oil together (↑ absorption of mineral oil)
Lubricants		
Mineral oil Oral liquid, enema OTC	PO: 15-45 mL daily or in divided doses PR (enema): 118 mL as a single dose	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Age < 6 years, pregnancy, bedridden patients, elderly, use > 1 week, difficulty swallowing **SIDE EFFECTS** Abdominal cramping, nausea, incontinence, rectal discharge **NOTES** Onset of action 6-8 hrs (PO), 2-15 mins (PR) PO not recommended due to safety concerns (e.g., risk of aspiration, lipid pneumonitis) Take a multivitamin at a different time due to malabsorption of fat-soluble vitamins Do not take docusate and mineral oil together (it increases the absorption of mineral oil)

OTHER DRUGS USED FOR CONSTIPATION

- The chloride channel activator lubiprostone acts on chloride channels in the gut, leading to increased fluid secretion and peristalsis.
- Guanylate cyclase C agonists (e.g., linaclotide) increase bicarbonate and chloride secretion into the lumen of the intestines, increasing the speed of GI transit and reducing abdominal pain.
- Peripherally-acting mu-opioid receptor antagonists (PAMORAs) (e.g., alvimopan) act on mu-opioid receptors in the GI tract.
- Serotonin 5-HT4 receptor agonists (e.g., prucalopride) release acetylcholine which causes muscle contractions and increases gastrointestinal motility.

PRESCRIPTION DRUGS BY INDICATION

	CIC	IBS-C	OIC	SURGERY
Lubiprostone	X	X*	X	
Linaclotide, Plecanatide	X	X		
Alvimopan				X
Methylnaltrexone, Naloxegol, Naldemedine			X	
Prucalopride	X			

**IBS-C in adult females*

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Chloride Channel Activator		
Lubiprostone *(Amitiza)* Capsule CIC, OIC, IBS-C in adult females	CIC & OIC: 24 mcg BID IBS-C: 8 mcg BID ↓ dose with moderate-severe liver impairment	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Mechanical bowel obstruction **SIDE EFFECTS** Nausea, diarrhea, abdominal pain and distension, headache **NOTES** Take with food and water to decrease nausea Consider alternative with methadone (↓ lubiprostone effects)
Guanylate Cyclase C Agonists		
Linaclotide *(Linzess)* Capsule CIC, IBS-C	CIC: 145 mcg daily IBS-C: 290 mcg daily Take ≥ 30 mins before breakfast on an empty stomach	**BOXED WARNING** Do not use in pediatric patients; high risk of dehydration that can cause death **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Age < 6 years, mechanical GI obstruction **SIDE EFFECTS** Diarrhea, abdominal pain, flatulence **NOTES** Swallow *Linzess* whole or open a capsule and mix contents with applesauce or room temp water; swallow immediately *Trulance* tablets can be crushed
Plecanatide *(Trulance)* Tablet CIC, IBS-C	3 mg daily	
Peripherally-Acting Mu-Opioid Receptor Antagonists (PAMORAs)		
Alvimopan *(Entereg)* Capsule For hospitalized surgery patients to decrease risk of post-operative ileus	12 mg, 30 min-5 hrs prior to surgery, then 12 mg BID for up to 7 days total (maximum 15 doses)	**BOXED WARNING** Potential risk of MI with long-term use; available only for short-term inpatient use through a REMS program **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Therapeutic doses of opioids for > 7 consecutive days immediately prior to use **SIDE EFFECTS** Dyspepsia
Methylnaltrexone *(Relistor)*		**NOTES** Only used in patients taking opioids who have OIC (see Pain chapter)
Naloxegol *(Movantik)*		
Naldemedine *(Symproic)*		
Serotonin 5-HT4 Receptor Agonist		
Prucalopride *(Motegrity)* Tablet CIC, used off-label for OIC	CIC: 2 mg daily CrCl < 30 mL/min: 1 mg daily Avoid use in ESRD with HD	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Gastrointestinal obstruction, bowel perforation, ileus, severe inflammatory conditions of the GI tract (Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis, toxic megacolon) **WARNINGS** Suicidal ideation **SIDE EFFECTS** Diarrhea, headache, nausea, abdominal pain **MONITORING** Worsening of depression or emergence of suicidal thoughts; rectal bleeding, blood in stool, severe abdominal pain

LAXATIVES USED FOR WHOLE BOWEL IRRIGATION

Some laxatives are designed to prep the bowel before a colonoscopy. Some of these drugs contain the same active ingredients as those used for constipation. Laxatives for whole bowel irrigation can cause fluid and electrolyte losses, which can be critical in some patients and with select products (e.g., oral sodium phosphates). Use extra caution in patients with cardiovascular disease, renal insufficiency or loop diuretic or NSAID use.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Polyethylene glycol-electrolyte solution *(Colyte, GoLytely,* *NuLytely, GaviLyte-G,* *GaviLyte-N, MoviPrep,* *Plenvu)*	Drink 240 mL every 10 mins until 4 liters are consumed *MoviPrep:* the PM before, drink 240 mL every 15 mins until 1 liter is consumed, then drink 480 mL clear liquid; repeat in AM *Plenvu:* the PM before, drink 480 mL over 30 mins, then drink 480 mL clear liquid over 30 mins; repeat in AM	**BOXED WARNING** *OsmoPrep:* nephropathy **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Ileus, GI obstruction, gastric retention, bowel perforation, toxic or megacolon *OsmoPrep:* acute phosphate nephropathy, gastric bypass or stapling surgery **WARNINGS** Arrhythmias, electrolyte abnormalities, seizures **SIDE EFFECTS** Abdominal discomfort, bloating, N/V **NOTES** Onset of action 1-6 hrs Bowel prep regimens typically require doses the evening before colonoscopy and the morning of colonoscopy to completely evacuate the bowel A clear liquid diet is required the day prior to colonoscopy and can include: water, clear broth (beef or chicken), juice without pulp (apple, white cranberry, white grape, lemonade), soda, coffee or tea (without milk or cream), clear gelatin or popsicles (without fruit pieces or cream) Do not consume the following: solid or semi-solid foods, anything with red or blue/purple food coloring (including gelatin and popsicles), milk, cream, tomato, orange or grapefruit juice, alcoholic beverages, cream soups
Sodium phosphates *(OsmoPrep)*	Take 4 tablets (with 8 oz of clear liquid) every 15 mins (5 doses the PM before and 3 doses 3-5 hrs before the procedure)	
Sodium sulfate, potassium sulfate and magnesium sulfate *(Suprep Bowel Prep Kit)*	PM before: drink 480 mL followed by 960 mL clear liquid over 1 hr; repeat in AM	
Sodium picosulfate, magnesium oxide, and citric acid *(Clenpiq)* Combination of a stimulant and osmotic laxative (enables lower fluid intake)	PM before: drink 160 mL; repeat 5 hrs before the procedure Contraindicated with severe renal impairment	

DIARRHEA

BACKGROUND

Diarrhea is an increase in the number of bowel movements or stools that are more watery and loose than normal. When the intestines push stools through the bowel before water in the stool can be reabsorbed, diarrhea occurs. Abdominal cramps, nausea, vomiting or fever can be present.

Diarrhea can be idiopathic or caused by diseases, drugs (see Key Drugs Guy on the next page) or consuming contaminated food/water. Most cases of diarrhea are viral, have a quick onset and resolve within a few days without treatment. *E. coli* is the most common bacterial cause. Infectious diarrhea is discussed in the Travelers and Infectious Diseases II chapters.

Recurrent idiopathic diarrhea associated with chronic or reoccurring abdominal discomfort that is relieved by defecation is termed irritable bowel syndrome with diarrhea (IBS-D). Diarrhea that occurs after consuming milk products could be due to lactose intolerance. Lactose intolerance can be confirmed through testing or eliminating dairy intake to see if diarrhea resolves.

SELECT DRUGS THAT CAN CAUSE DIARRHEA

Acetylcholinesterase inhibitors (e.g., donepezil)

Antacids containing magnesium

Antibiotics (especially broad-spectrum drugs), diarrhea may be infectious (e.g., *C. difficile)*

Antidiabetics (e.g., metformin, GLP-1 agonists)

Antineoplastics (e.g., irinotecan, capecitabine, fluorouracil, methotrexate, TKIs)

Colchicine

Drugs used for constipation (e.g., laxatives)

Misoprostol

Mycophenolate

Prokinetic drugs (e.g., metoclopramide, cisapride)

Protease inhibitors (especially nelfinavir)

Quinidine

Roflumilast

NON-DRUG TREATMENT

Management of diarrhea includes fluid and electrolyte replacement, especially in moderate-severe cases and in children, older adults or adults with chronic medical conditions. Dehydration from diarrhea in infants is dangerous (see Pediatrics chapter). Replace fluid and electrolytes with oral rehydration solutions (ORS), which are available OTC.

DRUG TREATMENT FOR DIARRHEA

Most patients with non-infectious diarrhea who require symptomatic relief can use short-term bismuth subsalicylate or loperamide. Bismuth subsalicylate has antisecretory and antimicrobial effects. Loperamide and diphenoxylate are antimotility drugs that slow intestinal motility, prolonging the time for water absorption. Pain and abdominal discomfort associated with IBS-D can be managed with antispasmodics (e.g., dicyclomine) and antidepressants in select cases.

Eluxadoline is indicated for IBS-D when other treatments have failed. It is a mixed mu-opioid receptor agonist. In contrast to the PAMORAs which displace the binding of opioids to receptors to reduce constipation, eluxadoline binds to opioid receptors as an agonist to treat diarrhea.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Antidiarrheals		
Bismuth subsalicylate ***(Pepto-Bismol***, others) Suspension (262 mg/15 mL) Chewable tablet (262 mg) OTC	524 mg (30 mL or 2 tablets) every 30-60 mins PRN or 1,050 mg (60 mL or 4 tablets) every 60 mins PRN Max: 4,200 mg/day for up to 2 days	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Salicylate allergy, taking other salicylates (e.g., aspirin), GI ulcer, bleeding problems, black/bloody stool **WARNINGS** Children and teenagers recovering from flu or other viral infection should not use this drug due to the risk of Reye's syndrome **SIDE EFFECTS** Black tongue/stool (temporary), salicylate toxicity if excessive use (tinnitus, metabolic acidosis), nausea, abdominal pain **NOTES** ↑ risk of bleeding when used with anticoagulants, antiplatelets (e.g., aspirin) or NSAIDs Use caution in those with renal insufficiency or in combination with other nephrotoxic drugs

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Loperamide *(Imodium A-D, Anti-Diarrheal, Diamode)* Capsule, tablet, liquid, suspension OTC 1 tab/cap = 2 mg	4 mg PO after the first loose stool, then 2 mg after each subsequent loose stool Max: 8 mg/day (self-care) or 16 mg/day (under healthcare supervision)	**BOXED WARNING** Torsades de pointes, cardiac arrest and sudden death with doses higher than recommended; do not exceed the recommended dose Do not use in children < 2 years **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Acute dysentery (bloody diarrhea, high fever), bacterial enterocolitis caused by invasive organisms *(E. coli, Salmonella, Shigella)*, abdominal pain without diarrhea, acute ulcerative colitis **SIDE EFFECTS** Constipation, abdominal cramping, nausea, QT prolongation **NOTES** Self-treatment: do not use > 48 hrs Can be abused; causes a mild opioid-like "high" in large doses Required use of blister packs or single-dose packaging for tabs/capsules; no more than 48 mg (24 tabs/caps) per package
Diphenoxylate/atropine *(Lomotil)* Liquid, tablet C-V Diphenoxylate inhibits excessive GI motility and propulsion; atropine is used to discourage abuse	Diphenoxylate 5 mg (2 tablets) up to 4 times daily Max: 20 mg/day Improvement is usually seen within 48 hrs; if not seen within 10 days, discontinue	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Risk of respiratory and CNS depression in children: do not use if age < 2 years or age < 6 years for tablets, diarrhea due to enterotoxin-producing bacteria or *C. difficile*, obstructive jaundice **SIDE EFFECTS** Mild euphoria due to diphenoxylate, anticholinergic effects **NOTES** Liquid formulation is recommended in children age < 13 years Mild anticholinergic effects due to atropine (e.g., dry mouth, sedation, tachycardia, flushing, urinary retention, blurred vision)
Antispasmodic		
Dicyclomine *(Bentyl)* Capsule, injection, solution, tablet	20 mg QID Max: 80 mg/day for < 2 weeks (can increase to 40 mg QID after 1 week, if symptoms respond)	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** GI obstruction, severe UC, reflux esophagitis, acute hemorrhage with CV instability, obstructive uropathy, narrow-angle glaucoma, myasthenia gravis, breastfeeding women, infants age < 6 months **WARNINGS** Anticholinergic (caution in age ≥ 65 years, per Beer's Criteria), caution in UC (can cause toxic megacolon, paralytic ileus) **SIDE EFFECTS** Dizziness, dry mouth, nausea, blurred vision, somnolence, weakness, nervousness
Peripherally-Acting Mixed Mu-Opioid Receptor Agonist		
Eluxadoline *(Viberzi)* Tablet C-IV IBS-D	100 mg PO BID Decrease to 75 mg BID if unable to tolerate 100 mg dose Take with food	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Patients without a gallbladder, biliary duct obstruction, sphincter of Oddi dysfunction, pancreatic disease, > 3 alcoholic drinks/day, Child-Pugh class C, history of severe constipation, GI obstruction **WARNINGS** CNS depression **SIDE EFFECTS** Constipation, nausea, abdominal pain **MONITORING** S/sx of pancreatitis or sphincter of Oddi spasm (e.g., abdominal pain that radiates to the back or shoulder, N/V), LFTs

OTHER ORAL MEDICATIONS FOR DIARRHEA

DRUG CLASS	COMMENTS
Antibiotic: Rifaximin *(Xifaxan)* IBS without constipation	Costly, and relapse often occurs within several months of treatment.
Serotonin 5-HT3 Receptor Antagonist: Alosetron *(Lotronex)* IBS-D	Approved for females only; boxed warning regarding risk of ischemic colitis.

KEY COUNSELING POINTS

See the Drug Formulations and Patient Counseling chapter for counseling language/layman's terminology.

ALL CONSTIPATION PRODUCTS

- Can cause diarrhea and/or abdominal cramping.
- If no improvement after one week of OTC treatment, contact a healthcare provider.

BULK-FORMING DRUGS

- Drug interactions due to binding.

ALL DIARRHEA PRODUCTS

- Contact a healthcare provider if: age < 6 months, pregnancy, high fever (> 101°F), severe abdominal pain or blood in the stool.
- Can cause constipation.

BISMUTH SUBSALICYLATE

- Do not take for longer than two days without the approval of your healthcare provider.
- Can cause:
  - ☐ Bleeding/bruising.
  - ☐ Dark tongue and stool; this is normal.

LOPERAMIDE

- Do not take for longer than two days without the approval of your healthcare provider.

DIPHENOXYLATE/ATROPINE

- Can cause anticholinergic effects.

DICYCLOMINE

- Can cause anticholinergic effects.

Select Guidelines/References

Chang L, Chey WD, Imdad A, et al. American Gastroenterological Association-American College of Gastroenterology Clinical Practice guideline: Pharmacological management of chronic idiopathic constipation. *Gastroenterology*. 2023;164(7):1086-1106.

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CHAPTER 73

INFLAMMATORY BOWEL DISEASE

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= Study Tip Gal

BACKGROUND

Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) is a group of inflammatory conditions of the colon and small intestine. The major types of IBD are ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease. The classic symptom is bloody diarrhea. Other symptoms include rectal urgency, tenesmus (a feeling of having to pass stools, even if the colon is empty), abdominal pain, fatigue and, in some cases, weight loss, night sweats, nausea, vomiting and constipation. IBD is a chronic, intermittent disease; symptoms can be mild to severe during flares (or exacerbations) and minimal or absent during periods of remission. Flares can occur at any time and can be triggered by infections, use of NSAIDs or certain foods. Food triggers are patient-specific but can include fatty foods and gas-producing foods (e.g., lentils, beans, legumes, cabbage, broccoli, onions).

IBD can be mistaken for irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), as they have similar symptoms (e.g., abdominal pain, bloating, gas, and either constipation or diarrhea). Unlike IBD, IBS does not cause inflammation and is not as serious of a condition. Drugs used to treat IBS primarily treat constipation or diarrhea; refer to the Constipation & Diarrhea chapter.

ULCERATIVE COLITIS

Ulcerative colitis (UC) is characterized by mucosal inflammation confined to the rectum and colon with superficial ulcerations. When UC is limited to the descending colon and rectum, it is called distal disease and can be treated with topical (rectal) treatment. Inflammation limited to the rectum is called proctitis. The larger the affected area (e.g., extensive UC), the worse the symptoms. When the disease flares, patients can have numerous stools per day, often with pain. UC is classified as mild, moderate, severe or fulminant depending on the number of stools per day and evidence of toxicity [e.g., fever, tachycardia, anemia, an elevated erythrocyte sedimentation rate (ESR)]. Patients with fulminant disease are at risk of progressing to toxic megacolon and bowel perforation.

CROHN'S DISEASE

Crohn's disease (CD) is characterized by deep, transmural (through the bowel wall) inflammation that can affect any part of the GI tract. The ileum and colon are most commonly affected. Damage to the bowel wall can cause strictures (narrowing of the bowel) and fistulas (abnormal connections or openings in the bowel). Symptoms of CD include chronic diarrhea (often nocturnal), abdominal pain and weight loss. Perianal symptoms [e.g., bleeding, fissures (tears)] can be present before bowel symptoms.

CD AND UC COMPARISON

CLINICAL FEATURES	CD	UC
Diarrhea	Bloody or non-bloody	Bloody
Fistulas/ Strictures	Common	Uncommon
Location	Entire GI tract (commonly the ileum & colon)	Colon (commonly the rectum)
Depth	Transmural	Superficial
Pattern	Non-continuous, "cobblestone" appearance	Continuous

DIAGNOSIS

IBD can be difficult to diagnose because the symptoms mimic other common conditions (e.g., constipation, diarrhea, infections, anorexia/bulimia, peptic ulcer disease) which must be ruled out. Laboratory blood tests (for inflammatory markers, such as CRP) and stool testing (e.g., fecal calprotectin test) can be helpful, but usually a colonoscopy with tissue biopsy is needed. A colonoscopy allows the healthcare provider to visualize the entire colon. For UC, a sigmoidoscopy might be used, which only evaluates the distal intestine, closest to the rectum. Endoscopy (scope through the mouth) might be used if upper GI symptoms are present. Imaging tests (e.g., CT, MRI) can also be helpful for diagnosis.

LIFESTYLE MEASURES, SUPPORTIVE CARE AND NATURAL PRODUCTS

Patients with IBD should adapt their diet to avoid foods that are likely to trigger flares. In general, eating smaller, more frequent meals that are low in fat and dairy products can be helpful. Fiber should be added to the diet, as tolerated, and patients should drink plenty of water. Alcohol and caffeinated beverages that can stimulate the GI tract should be avoided, as well as carbonated beverages that can be gas-producing. Sorbitol and lactose are excipients that are present in various medications. Sorbitol is often used as a sweetener in diet foods; it has laxative properties and can cause considerable GI distress in some patients. Lactose will worsen GI symptoms if the patient is lactose-intolerant.

Some patients use antidiarrheals or antispasmodic drugs (e.g., dicyclomine) to manage symptoms of diarrhea; these should be used cautiously, and under the supervision of a healthcare provider, as they need to be avoided in select patients with IBD (e.g., severe disease, acute exacerbations, post-bowel resection). Generally, opioid use should be avoided due to the side effect of constipation and an increased risk of developing toxic megacolon in this population. See the Constipation & Diarrhea and Pain chapters for more information. Vitamin supplements (e.g., B12, folate, vitamin D, calcium, iron, zinc) can help prevent deficiencies related to malabsorption. Nicotine and cigarette smoking have been shown to worsen CD but can be protective in UC. Nicotine patches have been used as an adjunct therapy for UC, but adverse effects (e.g., nausea, dizziness) limit the benefits.

The probiotics *Lactobacillus* or *Bifidobacterium infantis* can reduce abdominal pain, bloating, urgency, constipation or diarrhea in some patients. Fish oils with EPA and DHA (omega-3 fatty acids) can help fight inflammation, although the evidence for benefit is minimal. Some natural products that might be useful include peppermint (in oils or teas), chamomile, horehound and wheatgrass.

DRUG TREATMENT

Treatments for IBD are used to induce remission (they treat exacerbations or active disease) and/or maintain remission. Short courses of oral or IV steroids are commonly used to treat acute exacerbations in both UC and CD. Systemic steroids are not recommended for maintenance of remission and will usually be tapered over 8 – 12 weeks once remission is achieved.

In general, treatment options that are used for induction can be continued for maintenance of remission for both UC and CD, with the exception of steroids (due to the risk of long-term side effects). Treatment options for UC and CD are described in the Study Tip Gal on the next page.

Drugs specific to the treatment of UC and CD are discussed in this chapter. Medications with other indications are briefly discussed here, with more details provided in the Systemic Steroids & Autoimmune Conditions chapter:

- IV steroids
- Sphingosine 1-phosphate (S1P) receptor modulators (e.g., ozanimod)
- Janus kinase inhibitors (e.g., tofacitinib)
- Anti-TNF drugs (e.g., infliximab, adalimumab)
- Interleukin receptor antagonists (ustekinumab)
- Methotrexate

OVERVIEW OF MEDICATIONS USED FOR TREATMENT OF CD AND UC BASED ON SEVERITY

CROHN'S DISEASE

Mild disease of the ileum and/or right colon

- Oral budesonide for ≤ 3 months, then discontinue or change to a thiopurine or methotrexate

Moderate-severe disease

- Preferred treatments include:
  - Anti-TNF drug ± methotrexate or a thiopurine
  - IL receptor antagonist
  - Integrin receptor antagonist*
- Alternative options (not responding to above):
  - Janus kinase inhibitor

ULCERATIVE COLITIS

Mild disease

- Mesalamine (5-ASA)
  - Distal disease: rectal preferred
  - Extensive disease: rectal ± oral

Moderate-severe disease

- Preferred treatments include:
  - Anti-TNF drug ± a thiopurine
  - IL receptor antagonist
  - Integrin receptor antagonist
  - Oral sphingosine 1-phosphate receptor modulator
- Alternative options (not responding to above):
  - Janus kinase inhibitor

**Vedolizumab preferred (natalizumab is rarely used for CD).*

STEROIDS

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Oral Steroids		
Prednisone Tablet Oral solution *(Prednisone Intensol)* Delayed-release tablet *(Rayos)*	5-60 mg PO daily	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Systemic fungal infections, live vaccines **SIDE EFFECTS** Short-term: ↑ appetite/weight gain, emotional instability (euphoria, mood swings, irritability), insomnia, fluid retention, indigestion, higher doses can cause an ↑ in BP and blood glucose Long-term: adrenal suppression/Cushing syndrome, impaired wound healing, ↑ BP, ↑ blood glucose, cataracts, osteoporosis, others; refer to the Systemic Steroids & Autoimmune Conditions chapter **NOTES** **All Steroids** For management of acute flares; avoid long-term use if possible Can use alternate day therapy (ADT) to ↓ adrenal suppression and other adverse effects If used > 2 weeks, must taper to avoid withdrawal symptoms If long-term use is required, assess bone density (optimize calcium and vitamin D intake and consider bisphosphonates if needed) **Budesonide** Undergoes extensive first-pass metabolism; less systemic exposure than other oral steroids Swallow whole – do not crush or chew; can open *Entocort EC* capsules and sprinkle on applesauce
Budesonide *(Entocort EC, Uceris)* *Entocort EC*: 3 mg delayed release capsule (for CD only) *Uceris*: 9 mg extended release tablet (for UC only)	**Induction (CD and UC):** 9 mg PO once daily in the morning for up to 8 weeks **Maintenance (CD only):** 6 mg PO once daily for 3 months, then taper	

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Rectal Steroids		
Hydrocortisone *(Cortenema, Cortifoam)* Enema, rectal foam	**Induction and/or Maintenance** *Cortenema:* 1 enema (100 mg) QHS × 21 days or until remission, then taper *Cortifoam:* 1 applicatorful (90 mg) 1-2 times daily × 2-3 weeks, then every other day; taper after long-term therapy	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** *Cortifoam:* obstruction, abscess, perforation, peritonitis, fresh intestinal anastomoses, extensive fistulas and sinus tracts *Cortenema:* ileocolostomy in immediate/early post-op period **NOTES** Rectal steroids are indicated for UC only Not proven effective for maintenance of remission; maintenance use is limited to mild-moderate distal UC as an alternative to aminosalicylates Budesonide rectal foam: propellant is flammable; avoid fire and smoking during and after use
Budesonide rectal foam *(Uceris)*	**Induction** 1 metered dose (2 mg) PR BID × 2 weeks, then 1 metered dose daily × 4 weeks	

BUDESONIDE DRUG INTERACTIONS

- Budesonide is a major substrate of CYP3A4. Avoid moderate-strong CYP3A4 inhibitors, including grapefruit.
- Use of steroids with other immunosuppressants can increase the risk of serious adverse events.
- Antacids can cause enteric coated oral budesonide to dissolve prematurely due to ↑ gastric pH. Separate administration of antacids by two hours.

AMINOSALICYLATES

Aminosalicylates are indicated for treatment of UC; the mechanism of action is unknown, but they appear to have a topical anti-inflammatory effect in the gastrointestinal tract. Mesalamine (5-ASA) is the primary aminosalicylate; it is well tolerated and available in both oral and rectal formulations. The other aminosalicylates are available in oral form only and must be converted to mesalamine. Sulfasalazine is used less commonly due to the many side effects.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Sulfasalazine Tablets *(Azulfidine)* ER tablets *(Azulfidine EN-tabs)*	**Induction** 3-4 g divided TID or QID, titrate to 4-6 g daily divided QID **Maintenance** 2 g daily divided TID or QID	Refer to the Systemic Steroids & Autoimmune Conditions chapter **CONTRAINDICATIONS** Salicylate or sulfa allergy, intestinal or urinary obstruction, porphyria **NOTES** Doses should be taken at ≤ 8 hour intervals Can reduce dose if GI intolerance occurs

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Mesalamine ER capsules ***(Pentasa,*** *Apriso, Delzicol*)* DR tablets *(Lialda)* Enema ***(Rowasa)*** Suppository ***(Canasa)***	**Induction** *(oral therapy for 6-8 weeks and/or rectal therapy for 3-6 weeks)* Generic DR: 1.6 g TID *Delzicol:* 800 mg TID *Lialda:* 2.4-4.8 g daily *Pentasa:* 1 g QID Suppository: 1 g QHS, retain for ≥ 1-3 hrs Enema: 4 g QHS, retain overnight for approximately 8 hrs **Maintenance** *Apriso:* 1.5 g daily *Delzicol:* 1.6 g in 2-4 divided doses *Lialda:* 2.4 g daily *Pentasa:* 1 g QID Enema: 2 g QHS, or 4 g QHS every 2-3 days	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Hypersensitivity to salicylates or aminosalicylates **WARNINGS** Acute intolerance syndrome (cramping, acute abdominal pain, bloody diarrhea); caution with renal or hepatic impairment; delayed gastric retention can delay release of oral products in the colon; hypersensitivity reactions (e.g., myocarditis, pericarditis, nephritis, hematologic abnormalities) – more likely with sulfasalazine than mesalamine; ↑ risk of blood dyscrasias in patients > 65 years of age, photosensitivity *Apriso* contains phenylalanine; do not use with phenylketonuria (PKU) *Rowasa* contains potassium metabisulfite, can cause an allergic-type reaction **SIDE EFFECTS** Abdominal pain, nausea, HA, flatulence, eructation, nasopharyngitis **MONITORING** Renal function, CBC, hepatic function, s/sx of IBD **NOTES** Rectal mesalamine is more effective than oral mesalamine and rectal steroids for distal disease/proctitis in UC; can use oral and topical formulations together *Delzicol:* can leave a ghost tablet in the stool Swallow capsules/tablets whole; do not crush, chew or break due to delayed-release coating *Apriso:* do not use with antacids (dissolution is pH dependent)
Balsalazide *(Colazal)* Capsule	**Induction** 2.25 g (three 750 mg capsules) TID for 8-12 weeks	**CONTRAINDICATION** Salicylate allergy **WARNINGS** Gastric retention (e.g., due to pyloric stenosis) can delay release of drug in the colon; acute intolerance syndrome; caution with renal or hepatic impairment, photosensitivity **SIDE EFFECTS** Headache, abdominal pain, N/V/D **MONITORING** Renal function, LFTs, s/sx of IBD **NOTES** *Colazal* capsule can be opened and sprinkled on applesauce; beads are not coated, so mixture can be chewed if needed; when used this way, it can cause staining of the teeth/tongue
Olsalazine *(Dipentum)* Capsule	**Maintenance** 500 mg BID Take with food	**CONTRAINDICATION** Salicylate allergy **SIDE EFFECTS** Diarrhea, abdominal pain **MONITORING** CBC, LFTs, renal function, symptoms of IBD

**Brand discontinued but name still used in practice.*

THIOPURINES

The thiopurines, azathioprine and mercaptopurine, are immunosuppressive drugs, sometimes referred to as "immunomodulators." They are not FDA-approved for IBD but are an option in guidelines for induction and maintenance of remission, often in combination with other drugs.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Azathioprine *(Azasan, Imuran)* Tablet, injection	1.5-2.5 mg/kg/day IV or PO CrCl < 50 mL/min: adjustment required PO: taking after meals or in divided doses may ↓ GI side effects	**BOXED WARNINGS** Chronic immunosuppression ↑ risk of malignancy in patients with IBD (especially lymphomas); mutagenic potential; risk for hematologic toxicities **WARNINGS** Hematologic toxicities (e.g., leukopenia, thrombocytopenia, anemia); patients with a genetic deficiency of thiopurine methyltransferase (TPMT) are at ↑ risk for myelosuppression GI hypersensitivity reactions (severe N/V/D, rash, fever, ↑ LFTs), serious infections, hepatotoxicity **SIDE EFFECTS** N/V/D, rash, ↑ LFTs **MONITORING** LFTs, CBC (weekly for 1st month), renal function, s/sx of malignancy **NOTES** Consider TPMT genetic testing before starting (see Pharmacogenomics chapter) Azathioprine is metabolized to mercaptopurine; do not use in combination Aminosalicylates inhibit TPMT; caution with use in combination
Mercaptopurine *(Purixan)* Tablet, oral suspension	1-1.5 mg/kg/day CrCl ≤ 50 mL/min: adjustment required	Same as azathioprine above (except no boxed warning) plus: **NOTES** Take on an empty stomach Avoid old terms "6-mercaptopurine" and "6-MP"; they ↑ the risk of overdose due to administration of doses 6-fold higher than normal

ADVANCED THERAPY OPTIONS

These options are for patients with moderate to severe disease and/or that failed treatment for mild disease.

SPHINGOSINE 1-PHOSPHATE (S1P) RECEPTOR MODULATORS

S1P receptor modulators block lymphocytes from exiting the lymph nodes, reducing lymphocytes in the intestines. Drugs in this class include ozanimod and etrasimod (both approved for UC).

JANUS KINASE INHIBITORS

Janus kinase (JAK) enzymes stimulate immune cells. JAK inhibitors are considered second-line to S1P receptor modulators and biologic treatment options. Approved drugs include upadacitinib for UC and CD and tofacitinib for UC.

BIOLOGICS

Anti-TNF Monoclonal Antibodies

Anti-TNF drugs (e.g., infliximab, adalimumab) are monoclonal antibodies that bind to TNF-alpha, preventing induction of proinflammatory cytokines (e.g., interleukins). They are used for moderate-severe UC or CD, often with a thiopurine.

Interleukin Receptor Antagonists

There are several interleukin receptor antagonists used for IBD (with varied targets) which are used to treat moderate-severe disease. They include ustekinumab and risankizumab for CD and UC, and guselkumab and mirikizumab for UC.

Integrin Receptor Antagonists

These are monoclonal antibodies that bind to integrin molecules, which prevents inflammatory cells from migrating into GI tissue. They are indicated for induction and maintenance in moderate to severe IBD.

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Natalizumab *(Tysabri)* Injection Approved for CD and multiple sclerosis	IV over 1 hr every 4 weeks	Refer to the Systemic Steroids & Autoimmune Conditions chapter **BOXED WARNING** Progressive multifocal leukoencephalopathy (PML) Only available through the REMS TOUCH Prescribing Program **NOTES** Rarely used for CD due to risk of PML
Vedolizumab *(Entyvio, Entyvio Pen)* Injection Approved for CD and UC	*Entyvio:* IV over 30 min at 0, 2, and 6 weeks, then every 8 weeks *Entyivio Pen:* SC every 2 weeks after > 2 IV infusions (administer in place of next scheduled IV dose) Discontinue if no benefit by week 14	**WARNINGS** Infusion reactions, hypersensitivity reactions, infections, liver injury, PML Immunizations must be up to date before starting; avoid live vaccines **SIDE EFFECTS** Headache, nasopharyngitis, arthralgia, antibody development **MONITORING** LFTs, s/sx of infection, hypersensitivity, neurological symptoms (for PML), routine TB screening **NOTES** Risk of PML is lower than with natalizumab Swirl during reconstitution, do not shake

METHOTREXATE

Methotrexate is an immunosuppressive drug with anti-inflammatory properties. It is not FDA-approved for IBD, but it is recommended by guidelines for induction and maintenance of remission in moderate-severe CD, but is considered an alternative option due to adverse drug reactions and safety risks. It is dosed once weekly by IM or SC injection.

KEY COUNSELING POINTS

See the Drug Formulations and Patient Counseling chapter for counseling language/layman's terminology and instructions for suppository and enema administration.

MESALAMINE

- Select ER products can cause a ghost tablet.
- Administer enemas and suppositories in the evening, just before bedtime. Try not to have a bowel movement until morning.
- Enemas and suppositories can stain surfaces, including clothing and other fabrics.

Select Guidelines/References

American Gastroenterological Association (AGA) Clinical Practice Guidelines on the Medical Management of Moderate to Severe Luminal and Perianal Fistulizing Crohn's Disease. *Gastroenterology* 2021;160:2496–2508.

American Gastroenterological Association (AGA) Clinical Practice Guidelines on the Management of Mild-to-Moderate Ulcerative Colitis. *Gastroenterology* 2019;156:748-764.

American Gastroenterological Association (AGA) Living Clinical Practice Guidelines on Pharmacological Management of Moderate-to-Severe Ulcerative Colitis. *Gastroenterology* 2024;167:1307-1343.

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CHAPTER 74

MOTION SICKNESS

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DEFINITIONS

Nausea
The uncomfortable, queasy feeling that one may vomit.

Treatment
The chemoreceptor trigger zone (CTZ) in the CNS contains receptors for dopamine (DA), serotonin (5-HT) and acetylcholine (ACh). Each receptor can set off a chemical pathway leading to nausea and vomiting. Blocking the receptors reduces nausea, such as:

- Blocking 5-HT with 5-HT3 receptor antagonists (e.g., ondansetron)
- Blocking DA with phenothiazines (e.g., prochlorperazine)
- Blocking 5-HT and DA with metoclopramide (a prokinetic that moves food through the gut)

Nausea due to chemotherapy is treated with 5-HT3 receptor antagonists and various other medications; see the Oncology chapter.

Vertigo
Dizziness, with the sensation that the environment is moving or spinning. Vertigo is typically due to an inner ear condition that affects balance.

Treatment
- Vestibular (inner ear) suppressants, including antihistamines (e.g., meclizine, dimenhydrinate) and benzodiazepines

5-HT3 receptor antagonists are not useful for vertigo because they do not affect the inner ear.

Motion Sickness
Dizziness, with a sensation of being off-balance and woozy due to repetitive motions, such as a boat moving over waves or an airplane flying in turbulent weather.

Treatment
- Anticholinergics (e.g., scopolamine) or antihistamines (e.g., meclizine)

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BACKGROUND

Motion sickness (kinetosis) is a common condition also called travel/car sickness, seasickness or airsickness. Symptoms include nausea, dizziness and fatigue. People can get motion sickness on a boat, airplane, car or amusement park ride. Symptoms can be triggered in some patients by movies or video games.

NON-DRUG TREATMENT

Some patients find relief with a wrist band (e.g., *Sea-Band)* that presses on an acupuncture point located on the inside of the wrist, about the length of 2 fingernails up the arm from the center of the wrist crease.

Ginger is used commonly for nausea and some people find it helpful for motion sickness. Peppermint may also be helpful. The best way to stop motion sickness, if possible, is to stop the motion.

DRUG TREATMENT

Antihistamines and anticholinergics are recommended for motion sickness. Scopolamine, an anticholinergic, is commonly prescribed. It is not more effective than OTC drugs, but is applied topically (behind the ear) and is taken less frequently (lasts three days).

Antihistamines used for motion sickness include diphenhydramine, dimenhydrinate and meclizine. Oral medications must be taken 30 – 60 minutes prior to the needed effect. Dimenhydrinate and meclizine are long-acting piperazine antihistamines and are a little less sedating than other antihistamines. All of the antihistamines have anticholinergic effects.

Medications for motion sickness cause drowsiness and impair judgment. Pilots, ship crew members or anyone operating heavy equipment or driving a car should not take them. Sometimes combinations of products (such as scopolamine to reduce nausea, taken with a stimulant, such as dextroamphetamine, to counteract the drowsiness from the scopolamine) are used, but these combinations have significant risk and should not be routinely recommended.

Traditional antiemetics are discussed in the Oncology chapter. Promethazine is prescription only; for motion sickness, use is generally reserved for patients that do not respond to antihistamines. It should not be used in children due to the risk of respiratory depression; all promethazine products carry a boxed warning to avoid use in children less than 2 years old and strongly caution against use in children age 2 and older (see the Pediatric Conditions and Allergic Rhinitis, Cough & Cold chapters). Metoclopramide and the 5-HT3 receptor antagonists (e.g., ondansetron) are generally not effective for motion sickness.

MOTION SICKNESS DRUGS

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Scopolamine ***(Transderm Scop)***	**Motion Sickness** Apply 1 patch behind the ear at least 4 hrs before the effect is needed. May use a new patch every 3 days PRN. **Preoperative (e.g., cesarean section)** Apply 1 patch the night before surgery or 1 hr prior to surgery. Remove patch 24 hrs after surgery.	**CONTRAINDICATIONS** Hypersensitivity to belladonna alkaloids, closed-angle glaucoma **SIDE EFFECTS** Dry mouth CNS effects: drowsiness, dizziness, confusion (can be significant in elderly, frail), hallucinations (rare) Stinging of the eyes and pupil dilation (if eyes are touched after handling), risk of ↑ IOP, tachycardia (rare), withdrawal symptoms (e.g., diaphoresis, dizziness, fatigue, headache, nausea) after discontinuation (can last several days) **NOTES** Remove the patch before an MRI (contains metal) Avoid alcohol while wearing the patch Primarily for motion sickness, occasionally used inpatient Do not use in children

DRUG	DOSING	SAFETY/SIDE EFFECTS/MONITORING
Dimenhydrinate *(Dramamine)* Tablet, injection	**Motion Sickness** PO: 50-100 mg Q4-6 hrs **Nausea and Vomiting** IM, IV: 50-100 mg Q4 hrs	**WARNINGS** CNS depression (may impair physical or mental abilities, caution in elderly), worsening of BPH symptoms, ↑ IOP (glaucoma) **SIDE EFFECTS** Dizziness, drowsiness, dry mouth, blurry vision, tachycardia **NOTES** There are various OTC formulations of *Dramamine* with different ingredients. *Dramamine* contains only dimenhydrinate. *Dramamine Less Drowsy* contains only meclizine.
Meclizine *(Dramamine Less Drowsy,* *Bonine)*	25-50 mg PO 1 hour before travel, can repeat Q24 hrs PRN	**WARNINGS** CNS depression (may impair physical or mental abilities, caution in elderly), worsening of BPH symptoms, ↑ IOP (glaucoma) **SIDE EFFECTS** Drowsiness, dry mouth, dry eyes, blurry vision, tachycardia **NOTES** Commonly used for vertigo

KEY COUNSELING POINTS

See the Drug Formulations and Patient Counseling chapter for counseling language/layman's terminology.

SCOPOLAMINE PATCH

- See Study Tip Gal to the right for application instructions.
- Can cause:
  - ☐ Drowsiness.
  - ☐ Dry mouth.
  - ☐ Vision changes, such as blurry vision and widening of the pupils.
- Withdrawal symptoms after discontinuation are more likely with prolonged use (3 days or longer).
- Remove patch before an MRI.

SCOPOLAMINE PATCH

For N/V due to motion sickness or anesthesia/surgery

- Apply at least 4 hours before needed or the night before surgery
- Press firmly to skin behind ear for 30 seconds
- Avoid placing the patch over hair, or when the patch is removed, the hair may be removed, too
- Lasts 3 days; if continued treatment needed, remove the first patch and place a new patch behind the other ear

- Wash hands after applying

Do not drive: high level of drowsiness, dizziness and confusion.
These anticholinergic side effects are worse, and not well-tolerated, in elderly patients (avoid use when possible).

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PHARMACY FOUNDATIONS PART 2

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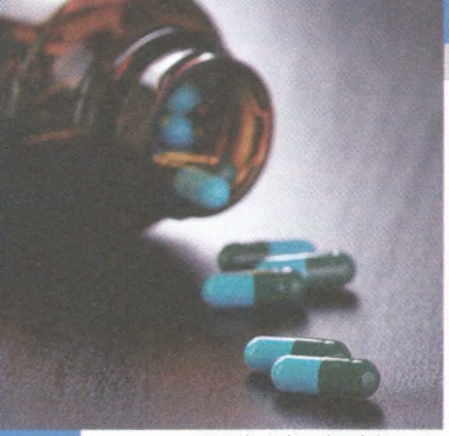

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CHAPTER 75

MEDICATION SAFETY & QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

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= Study Tip Gal

BACKGROUND

A report published by the Institute of Medicine (IOM), To Err is Human (1999), increased awareness of the prevalence of medical errors. The study found that up to 98,000 Americans die each year in U.S. hospitals due to preventable medical errors, with 7,000 from medication errors alone. The report led to the development of numerous national policy and practice initiatives directed at improving patient safety. Today, reducing preventable harm in the healthcare system remains a top priority.

HOW TO APPROACH MEDICATION SAFETY

The term "medication safety" is defined as freedom from preventable harm due to medication use. It is an essential component of all areas of pharmacy practice and therefore included in most chapters in this course book (see examples in the table below). This chapter is intended to set the foundation and discuss some of the core elements of medication safety.

TOPIC	SELECT CHAPTERS
Collaborative practice*	Diabetes Anticoagulation Contraception & Infertility
Disease prevention and stewardship*	Immunizations Human Immunodeficiency Virus Hypertension
Transitions of care and continuity of care**	Patient Care & Professional Practice Drug Formulations & Patient Counseling
Vulnerable populations*	Drug Use in Pregnancy & Lactation Pediatric Conditions Oncology
Pharmacy informatics*	Drug References Lab Values & Drug Monitoring

**NAPLEX Domain 4 "Professional Practice"*
***NAPLEX Domain 5 "Pharmacy Management and Leadership"*

MEDICATION ERRORS

The National Coordinating Council for Medication Error Reporting and Prevention (NCC MERP) defines a medication error as "any preventable event that may cause or lead to inappropriate medication use or patient harm while the medication is in the control of the healthcare professional, patient or consumer." A medication error can occur at any step of the medication use process (see diagrams later in chapter).

Do not confuse medication errors with adverse drug reactions (ADRs). ADRs are usually not preventable, but they may be more likely if a drug is given to a patient at high risk for certain complications. Furthermore, the severity of some ADRs can be reduced with changes in care, such as if additional monitoring was performed (refer to the Lab Values & Drug Monitoring and Drug Allergies & Adverse Drug Reactions chapters).

EXAMPLE OF AN ADR (NOT A MEDICATION ERROR)

A 55-year-old female has a history of herpes zoster. She reports considerable "shingles pain" and received a prescription for pregabalin. She returned to the clinic with ankle swelling, which required drug discontinuation.

This is not a medication error made by the prescriber of pregabalin or the pharmacist who dispensed it. Rather, this is a side effect that can occur with use of this drug.

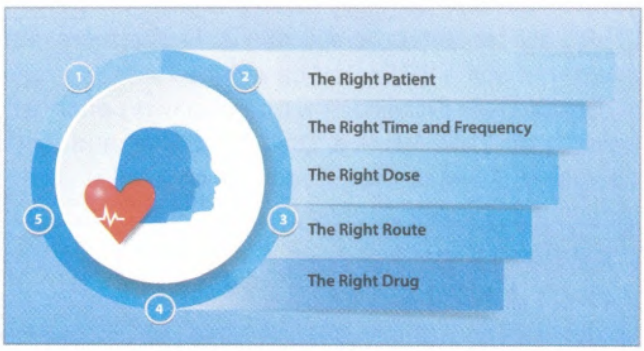
A close call (also called a near miss) is an error that is detected and corrected before a patient is harmed (e.g., a patient picks up a prescription for levothyroxine, but notices the tablets are a different color from previous prescriptions and alerts the pharmacist before taking the medication).

A sentinel event is a patient safety event that results in death, severe harm (of any duration) or permanent harm (regardless of severity) of a patient. When a sentinel event occurs, it is important to find out what went wrong and implement measures to prevent it from happening again.

Errors can be further divided into errors of omission and commission. Errors of omission occur when something was left out that is needed for safety (e.g., failing to use a pharmacist double-check system for chemotherapy orders). Errors of commission occur when something was done incorrectly (e.g., prescribing bupropion to a patient with a history of seizures).

MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION ERRORS

Many medication errors occur when at least one of the "five rights" was not upheld (see image). These rights reflect aspects of medication administration where errors can occur and should be double-checked every time a medication is administered. In this context, "right" means "correct," as in the correct patient, dose, route, etc. These rights represent the goals of medication safety at the most basic level and must be combined with other system-based error prevention methods to be successful (discussed later in chapter).



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CAUSES OF MEDICATION ERRORS

There are many causes of medication errors (see box), as human error is inevitable and unpredictable. Errors occur unintentionally because of the way we navigate high-stress and intricate work environments and perform complex tasks. Though humans commit errors, they are usually caused by problems with the system (referred to as "system-based" errors). However, human error must be distinguished from at-risk and reckless behaviors:

- At-risk behaviors: when an individual has lost the perception of risk, or mistakenly believes the risk to be insignificant or justified. Examples include developing "workarounds" for time-consuming or tedious processes, like failing to scan a medication's barcode prior to patient administration because it has a high rate of scanning failures.
- Reckless behaviors: a conscious disregard of a substantial and unjustifiable risk. Examples include working under the influence of drugs or alcohol and drug diversion.

CAUSES OF COMPROMISED PATIENT SAFETY

- Low patient health literacy
- Insufficient training, lack of experience or unfamiliarity with tasks
- Breakdowns in communication
  - Hesitancy to speak up or question authority/ other professions
  - Rushed communication
- Competing priorities in the face of stress, fatigue or burnout
  - Running on "autopilot"
- Fast-paced, high-volume environment with time constraints
  - Frequent interruptions, lapses in concentration
- Complex technology and processes
  - Creation of "workarounds" to subvert complexity

ORGANIZATIONS FOCUSED ON PATIENT SAFETY

Organizations that specialize in error prevention can analyze the system-based causes of errors and make recommendations. They also help in setting standards and best practices for patient safety.

THE INSTITUTE FOR SAFE MEDICATION PRACTICES (ISMP)

The ISMP is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the prevention of medication errors across all healthcare settings. Since errors that occur in one organization are likely to occur in another, the ISMP releases Medication Safety Alert newsletters to share information across healthcare organizations, so that process improvements can be implemented proactively to prevent future events. Every pharmacist should routinely read medication error reports such as this one and evaluate the potential for the same error within their own institution.

Part of the ISMP is the national Medication Errors Reporting Program (MERP), which is a confidential, voluntary reporting program. It provides expert analysis of the system causes of medication errors, and based on errors reported, releases best practice recommendations on a biannual basis.

Medication errors and close calls can be reported on the ISMP website (www.ismp.org). Professionals and consumers should report medication errors using this site even if the error was reported internally. When there are many reports of a particular error, the manufacturer may be required to take measures to increase drug safety (e.g., REMS program, name change, packaging change).

THE JOINT COMMISSION (TJC)

The Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (TJC) is an independent, not-for-profit organization that accredits and certifies more than 20,000 healthcare organizations and programs in the U.S., including hospitals, healthcare networks, long-term care facilities, home care organizations, office-based surgery centers and independent laboratories. TJC focuses on the highest quality and safety of care and sets standards that institutions must meet to be accredited. An accredited organization must undergo regular on-site surveys, which are often unannounced.

NATIONAL PATIENT SAFETY GOALS

National Patient Safety Goals (NPSGs) are set annually by TJC for different types of healthcare settings (e.g., ambulatory care, behavioral health, hospital). Each goal includes defined measures that must be met, called "Elements of Performance." These are often included in institutional protocols. Important NPSGs for pharmacists are described below.

- Use at least two patient identifiers when providing care, treatment and services.
  - Appropriate patient identifiers include name, medical record number and date of birth.
  - Inappropriate patient identifiers include zip code, room number and physician name.
- Reduce the likelihood of patient harm associated with the use of anticoagulant therapy.
  - This includes the requirement to use dosing protocols and programmable pumps (e.g., for heparin) and provide education to patients and families. Protocols should include starting dose ranges, alternate dosing strategies to address drug-drug interactions, communication with the dietary department to address drug-food interactions, general monitoring requirements and monitoring for bleeding and heparin-induced thrombocytopenia (HIT).
- Maintain and communicate accurate patient medication information.
  - This includes medication reconciliation, providing written information to the patient and conducting discharge counseling. The medication name, dose, frequency, route and indication (at a minimum) should be confirmed. Refer to the section on Medication Reconciliation later in this chapter.

SELECT NATIONAL PATIENT SAFETY GOALS

Identify patients correctly: use at least two patient identifiers when providing care, treatment and services (NPSG 01.01.01).

Improve staff communication: report critical results of tests and diagnostic procedures on a timely basis (NPSG 02.03.01).

Use medications safely:

- Label all medications, medication containers (e.g., syringes) and other solutions on and off the sterile field in perioperative and other procedural settings (NPSG 03.04.01).
- Reduce the likelihood of patient harm associated with the use of anticoagulant therapy (NPSG 03.05.01).
- Maintain and communicate accurate patient medication information (NPSG 03.06.01).

Use clinical alarms safely: improve the safety of clinical alarm systems (NPSG 06.01.01).

Prevent infections: comply with either the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) or World Health Organization (WHO) hand hygiene guidelines (NPSG 07.01.01).

CENTER FOR MEDICAID AND MEDICARE SERVICES (CMS)

CMS (part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) surveys hospitals seeking reimbursement for Medicare and Medicaid patients. In order to bill to Medicare, hospitals must meet standards of patient safety set by CMS. Many of these standards are similar to measures developed by TJC.

OTHER ACCREDITING ORGANIZATIONS

Other organizations that accredit and certify healthcare programs include:

- National Association of Boards of Pharmacy (NABP): accredits many pharmacy settings (e.g., community, compounding)
- Accreditation Association for Ambulatory Health Care (AAAHC)
- Accreditation Commission for Health Care (ACHC)
- Center for Improvement in Healthcare Quality (CIHQ)
- Utilization Review Accreditation Commission (URAC)

These organizations have standards that must be met to obtain accreditation. The approaches to accreditation are different, and institutions can select the organization that best matches their needs.

MEASURES TO REDUCE MEDICATION ERRORS

PHARMACY & THERAPEUTICS COMMITTEE

The Pharmacy & Therapeutics (P&T) committee is an interdisciplinary team responsible for ensuring safe and effective drug use in the healthcare setting. One key responsibility includes developing, maintaining, and reviewing the drug formulary (a list of approved drugs available for use at a hospital or within a health-system) and developing policies on therapeutic substitutions to ensure optimal use of formulary medications.

Other responsibilities include developing mitigation strategies during drug shortages (e.g., therapeutic alternatives, guidance on reallocation), performing medication use evaluations to assess for appropriate medication use (e.g., appropriate indication, dose and monitoring of high cost or high-risk medications), as well as overseeing quality improvement initiatives such as protocol development and medication safety reporting.

IMPLEMENT JUST CULTURE

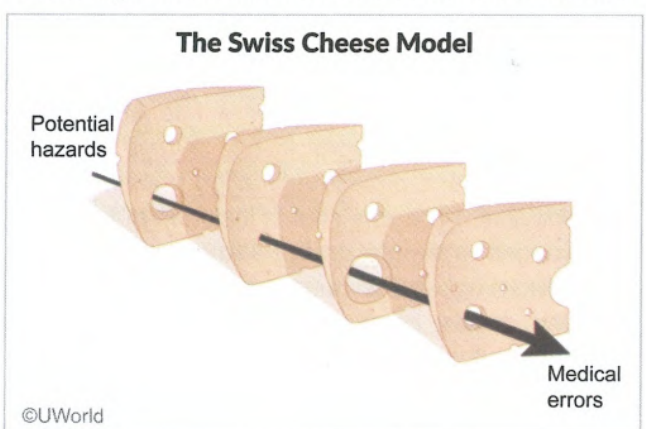
When blame is placed on the individual who committed the error, individuals may be hesitant about reporting mistakes, which prevents identification and managing hazardous situations. Instead, organizations should implement a culture of safety by doing the following:

- Acknowledge the high-risk nature of healthcare and be determined to achieve safe operations.
- Implement a blame-free environment where individuals are able to report errors and near misses without fear of reprimand or punishment (often referred to as "just culture").
- Encourage collaboration across disciplines and levels of authority to seek patient safety solutions.
- Dedicate resources to track, monitor and address safety concerns.

ANALYZE ERRORS USING A SYSTEMS-BASED APPROACH

A systems-based approach to patient safety seeks to identify situations or factors that are likely to give rise to human error and recommend changes and mitigation strategies (e.g., human factors engineering strategies, see table on the next page) to decrease the risk of future errors.

Most errors result from multiple, smaller errors at different steps in the process (often referred to as the "Swiss Cheese" model). In this model, each layer represents a wall of defense and the holes represent the deficiencies of each layer that could allow an error to pass through (see illustration). When the holes align, it allows a hazard to reach the end of the process (e.g., a medical error reaches a patient). Strategies often need to be employed at multiple steps in the process, as no single intervention is 100% effective or reliable.



HUMAN FACTORS ENGINEERING STRATEGIES

STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION AND EXAMPLES
High Reliability	
Forcing functions	Create hard stops in a design or process to eliminate the risk of incorrect use ■ Example: require specific fields to be completed during order entry
Computerized automation	Utilize automated processes to remove human effort and variations that cause error ■ Example: use a computerized order entry system to prevent transcription errors
Human machine redundancy	Create a repetitive step to confirm a correct action in an error-prone process ■ Example: electronically scan the barcode of medications in addition to visual inspection
Medium Reliability	
Standardization and simplification	Align processes to minimize variation, complexity and learning curve ■ Example: every pharmacist follows the same approved renal dosing protocol
Environment and physical layout	Design workspaces to facilitate correct action and minimize error and/or distractions ■ Example: stock medications prone to error separately from each other
Reminders and alerts	Develop processes and prompts to notify clinicians to check actions to reduce errors ■ Example: alerts for patient allergies and drug-drug interactions
Double checks	Engage a second person to independently review a high-risk process ■ Example: require two pharmacists to individually review chemotherapy
Low Reliability	
Education and training	Provide regular instruction on medication errors ■ Example: monthly review of recent medication errors with staff
Policy changes	Develop a policy to address general work flows, error-prone processes and best practices ■ Example: a policy outlining the multidisciplinary review of medication errors that occur in the facility

MANAGE CARE TRANSITIONS EFFECTIVELY

Care transitions refers to the movement of patients from one setting to another, such as from the intensive care unit to the medical ward or when being discharged from the hospital to home. Every transition poses a risk of an error occurring, especially with medications.

An important aspect of managing care transitions is to perform patient counseling, as poor health literacy increases the risk for medication errors. Patients prevent medication errors when they are encouraged to ask questions and seek satisfactory answers about their medications before drugs are dispensed. If a patient questions any part of the medication dispensing process (e.g., the drug's appearance, dose) the pharmacist must be receptive and responsive (not defensive). All patient inquiries should be thoroughly investigated before a medication is dispensed.

Written information that is provided about medications should be at a reading level that is appropriate for the patient. It may be necessary to provide pictures or other means of instruction to patients who do not speak English or are unable to read English. Attempts must be made to communicate to the patient in their language, using on-site staff or dial-in translation services.

MEDICATION RECONCILIATION

Medication reconciliation ("med rec") should be performed at every care transition (see steps below). This reconciliation is done to avoid medication errors such as omissions, duplications, dosing errors or drug interactions during transitions of care. The medication reconciliation process is comprised of five steps:

- Develop a list of current medications (including OTC) and dietary supplements
- Develop a list of medications to be prescribed
- Compare the medications on the two lists
- Note discrepancies and make decisions to continue, stop or hold medications based on the comparison and clinical status of the patient
- Communicate the new list to the patient, caregivers and healthcare providers involved in the patient's care

Medication reconciliation is most effective when complete and accurate information is entered into the patient's medical record. When information (e.g., weight, past medical history) is unavailable, errors can result. For this reason, pharmacists are often involved in documenting home medication use and performing medication reconciliation. In many hospitals, admission orders cannot be entered until medication reconciliation is complete.

Discharge medication reconciliation is an opportunity for the prescriber to address the patient's home medications that were "on hold" during the hospitalization and which medications used during the hospitalization should be continued when the patient goes home. Medication reconciliation is equally important in ambulatory care, as many patients receive prescriptions from more than one outpatient provider and may go to several pharmacies.

INCLUDE INDICATIONS AND PROPER INSTRUCTIONS ON PRESCRIPTIONS

An indication for use written on the prescription (e.g., lisinopril 10 mg once daily for hypertension) helps pharmacists ensure appropriate prescribing and drug selection.

The term "as directed" is not acceptable on prescriptions because the patient often will not know what this means, and the pharmacist cannot verify proper dosing. Occasionally, this phrase is used with a separate dosing calendar (e.g., with warfarin). It is preferable to write "use per instructions on the dosing calendar" since the patient may not be aware that a separate dosing calendar exists.

EXAMPLE OF THE BENEFIT OF MEDICATION RECONCILIATION

AN is an 82-year-old female. Her only medication for the previous ten years has been atenolol 25 mg daily. She recently developed influenza, had trouble breathing and was taken to the hospital. She was diagnosed with pneumonia and heart failure and was prescribed sacubitril/valsartan, carvedilol, dapagliflozin and furosemide. AN was discharged and received the new medications plus her home atenolol. A consultant pharmacist conducted a medication reconciliation and, after discussion with the physician, wrote an order to discontinue the atenolol.

UTILIZE MEDICATION THERAPY MANAGEMENT

Errors may be discovered during a medication therapy review (MTR) as part of the medication therapy management (MTM) process. MTM involves the preparation of a personal medication record (PMR) and a medication-related action plan (MAP), preferably by a pharmacist-led team. The next steps involve interventions or referrals, documentation and plans for follow-up. Patients targeted for MTM include those with multiple chronic conditions who are taking multiple drugs and are likely to incur annual costs for covered drugs that exceed a predetermined level. Computer databases are used to identify patients with certain high-risk conditions (such as heart failure or uncontrolled diabetes) and assign a pharmacist to review profiles for proper medication use.

These reviews may identify missing therapy (e.g., lack of an ACE inhibitor or ARB in patients with diabetes and albuminuria) or result in de-prescribing (i.e., stopping unnecessary medications). A popular MTM initiative is to improve nonadherence in patients with heart failure due to the high rate of ED visits.

MTM can identify cost savings, by promoting switching to a generic or more affordable brand (often initiated by an insurance company), or by suggesting patient assistance programs or subsidies for those eligible.

IMPLEMENT INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAMS

An interdisciplinary team involves clinicians from different backgrounds (e.g., nurses, pharmacists, physician, physical therapists, respiratory therapists) that work collaboratively to provide patient care. This allows clinicians to share expertise, resources and skills. For example, a dietitian can provide input on a patient's fluid, macronutrient and micronutrient needs as well as route and timing of nutritional support while occupational therapists focus on improving a patient's ability to perform activities of daily living.

A team may work together under a formal relationship (e.g., a collaborative practice agreement between a physician and pharmacist) or as a less formal team (e.g., a rounding service at a hospital). Stewardship is an interdisciplinary process that involves reviewing patient medications to optimize safety and efficacy and ensure appropriate use. Stewardship activities often target high-risk drug classes (e.g., antimicrobials, anticoagulants and opioids).

COLLABORATIVE PRACTICE AGREEMENTS (CPAs)

CPAs allow pharmacists to perform advanced care activities (e.g., order and monitor therapeutic drug levels, modify doses). This ensures a focus on medication safety and improved patient outcomes. The requirements for CPAs differ based on the legal jurisdiction (i.e., state laws) and institution.

DEDICATE PHARMACISTS TO HIGH-RISK AREAS

Decentralizing pharmacists to make them more available in high-risk areas (e.g., intensive care unit, pediatric unit, emergency department) improves drug safety. Because these areas have a high incidence of preventable medication errors, pharmacists can work directly with providers on these units to optimize the medication use process and proactively develop solutions to prevent medication errors.

EDUCATE STAFF

Staff education, including "in-services" or electronic competency activities, should be provided whenever new high-alert drugs are being used in the facility, to introduce new guidelines or process changes aimed at preventing medication errors and upon hiring of new employees. Many organizations require annual competency activities to re-train employees on important initiatives.

DEVELOP ORGANIZATIONAL POLICIES FOR HIGH-RISK SCENARIOS AND ERROR-PRONE PRACTICES

Healthcare organizations will often create policies and protocols that include best practices for high-risk scenarios and/or to address error-prone activities. In general, policies are the least effective strategy to reduce errors, because individuals must be aware of them, which is why employees require initial and regular training about existing policies for them to be effective. The following examples are common policies that an organization should maintain for safety.

MEDICATION ERROR POLICY

A medication error policy commits resources and a standard process for responding to medication errors as well as reporting when errors occur. Policies will often also address tracking errors and developing an interdisciplinary team to investigate errors.

Response

Institutions should have a plan in place to respond to medication errors. The plan should address:

- Internal notification: who should be notified within the institution and within what time frame?
- External reporting: who should be notified outside of the institution?
- Disclosure: what information should be shared with the patient/family? Who will be present when this occurs?
- Investigation: what is the process for immediate and long-term internal investigation of an error?
- Improvement: what process will ensure immediate and long-term preventative actions are taken?

Reporting

Medication errors, preventable adverse drug reactions, hazardous conditions and "close calls" or "near misses" should be reported. Medication errors are reported so that system changes can be made to prevent similar errors in the future. Without reporting, these events go unrecognized and will likely happen again because others will not learn from the incident.

The staff member who discovers the error should immediately report it to the appropriate authority (e.g., corporate office, owner of an independent pharmacy, designated hospital office) using the established reporting structure. Many state boards of pharmacy require quality assurance programs to promote pharmacy processes that prevent medication errors. Error investigations need to take place quickly (within 48 hours of the incident) so that the sequence of events remains clear to those involved. Many states mandate the ethical requirement that errors be reported to the patient and the prescriber as soon as possible.

Most medication error reporting systems are electronic. The hospital's Pharmacy and Therapeutics (P&T) committee and Medication Safety Committee (or similar entity) should be informed of the error.

Evaluation and Quality Improvement

Evaluation and quality improvement can be performed prospectively, retrospectively or continuously.

- Prospective
  - A failure mode and effects analysis (FMEA) is a proactive method to reduce the frequency and consequences of errors. FMEA analyzes the design of the system to evaluate the potential for failure and to determine what effects could occur when the medication delivery system changes in any substantial way or if a potentially dangerous new drug is added to the formulary.
- Retrospective
  - A root cause analysis (RCA) is a retrospective investigation of an event that has occurred, which includes reviewing the sequence of events that led to the error. The information obtained in the analysis is used to design changes that will hopefully prevent future errors. The TJC requires that an RCA is performed after a sentinel event.
- Continuous
  - Continuous quality improvement (CQI) is the goal for most healthcare settings. CQI improves efficiency, quality and patient satisfaction while reducing costs. Examples include Lean and Six Sigma, which are often used together. Lean focuses on minimizing waste; Six Sigma aims to reduce defects using the DMAIC (define, measure, analyze, improve, control) process.

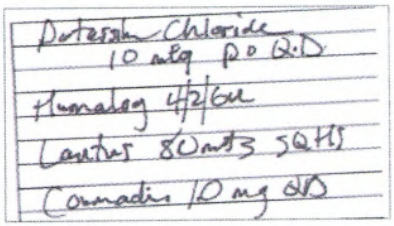
UNSAFE ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations are unsafe and contribute to medical errors. The minimum list of "Do Not Use" abbreviations per TJC is shown below. ISMP also publishes a list of error-prone abbreviations, symbols and dosage designations. All institutions accredited by TJC are required to have a list of abbreviations that should not be used in the facility. This list must include all of the abbreviations from the TJC "Do Not Use" list and any additional abbreviations selected by the institution (e.g., those that have resulted in significant errors in the past). The unapproved abbreviation list should be readily accessible in the institution (e.g., wall charts, pocket cards). It is best to avoid abbreviations entirely. Electronic prescribing can eliminate errors associated with poor handwriting. See the Study Tip Gal.

DO NOT USE ABBREVIATIONS

DO NOT USE	POTENTIAL PROBLEM	USE INSTEAD
U, u (unit)	Mistaken for "0" (zero), the number "4" (four) or "cc"	Write "unit"
IU (international unit)	Mistaken for IV (intravenous) or the number 10 (ten)	Write "international unit"
Q.D., QD, q.d., qd (daily) Q.O.D., QOD, q.o.d., qod (every other day)	Mistaken for each other Period after the Q mistaken for "I" and the "O" mistaken for "I"	Write "daily" Write "every other day"
Trailing zero (X.0 mg) Lack of leading zero (.X mg)	Decimal point is missed resulting in a 10-fold dosing error	Write X mg Write 0.X mg
MS MSO_4 and $MgSO_4$	Can mean morphine sulfate or magnesium sulfate Confused with one another	Write "morphine sulfate" or "magnesium sulfate"

EXAMPLE OF CONFUSION WITH ABBREVIATIONS



How often should the potassium be given?

Is that 8 or 80 units of *Lantus*?

Coumadin 1 or 10 mg? Once daily or four times per day?

LOOK-ALIKE, SOUND-ALIKE MEDICATIONS

Tall Man Lettering

Look-alike, sound-alike ("LASA") medications are a common cause of medication errors. Poor handwriting and similar product labeling aggravate the problem. Drugs that are easily mixed up should be labeled with tall man letters. For example:

- *CeleXA*, *CeleBREX*
- predniSONE, prednisoLONE

Tall man lettering mixes upper and lower case letters to draw attention to the dissimilarities in drug names. The letters that are upper case are the ones that are different between the two look-alike, sound-alike drugs. Safety-conscious organizations (e.g., ISMP, FDA, TJC) have promoted the use of tall man letters as one means of reducing confusion between similar drug names. Information on approved tall man lettering is available through the Emergency Care Research Institute (ECRI) and the ISMP web page. Drug dictionaries (also known as drug libraries) within computer systems and automated dispensing cabinets (ADCs) often have alerts that prompt the provider to confirm that the correct medication is being ordered or withdrawn. For example, a warning may appear on the screen of the ADC that will state: "This is *DILAUDID*. Did you want HYDROmorphone?" to avoid confusion with morphine.

Medications With Similar Packaging

- Look-alike packaging can contribute to errors. If unavoidable, separate look-alike drugs in the pharmacy and patient care units, or repackage. Never rely on the package appearance (e.g., color, design) to identify the right drug product. Pharmacies frequently have to purchase products from different manufacturers (and these may look vastly different each time).

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Example of similar drug packaging: Cardene (nicardipine), left; Nexterone (amiodarone), right

EXAMPLE OF AN ERROR DUE TO MISIDENTIFICATION OF A CONCENTRATION BASED ON THE PACKAGING

The intravenous catheters of three neonates in a NICU were flushed with a higher heparin concentration of 10,000 units/mL rather than the heparin flush concentration of 10 units/mL. This accident did not result in fatalities, although two of the babies required the reversal agent protamine.

Three babies died from a similar incident the previous year at a different hospital. The wrong product was accidentally selected and administered because the packaging for the two concentrations looked similar and the products were stored in the same location.

Due to the high risk associated with heparin overdose (i.e., bleeding), high concentration heparin vials should be stored in the pharmacy and delivered when needed; they should not be present in patient care areas.

HIGH-ALERT MEDICATIONS

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Drugs with a heightened risk of causing significant patient harm if used in error should be designated as high-alert (see Study Tip Gal below). The ISMP "high-alert" list for acute care settings is available online. ISMP's list represents the most common drugs that are high risk, but an institution's list may include additional drugs based on experience in that setting.

High-alert medications can be used safely by developing polices, protocols or order sets for use, using premixed products when possible, limiting concentrations available and stocking high-alert products only in the pharmacy. See examples of safe use precautions for insulin and potassium chloride to the right. Protocols for high-alert drugs increase appropriate prescribing and reduce the chance of errors from inappropriate prescribing.

SELECT HIGH-ALERT MEDICATIONS

- Anesthetics, inhaled or IV (e.g., propofol)
- Antiarrhythmics, IV (e.g., amiodarone)
- Anticoagulants/antithrombotics (e.g., heparin)
- Chemotherapeutics (e.g., methotrexate)
- Epidural/intrathecal drugs
- Hypertonic saline (greater than 0.9% NaCl)
- Immunosuppressants (e.g., cyclosporine)
- Inotropics (e.g., digoxin)
- Insulin (e.g., insulin aspart, insulin U-500)
- Magnesium sulfate injection
- Neuromuscular blocking agents (e.g., vecuronium)
- Opioids
- Oral hypoglycemics (e.g., sulfonylureas)
- Parenteral nutrition
- Potassium chloride and phosphates for injection
- Sterile water for injection

Any drug that is high-risk for significant harm if dispensed incorrectly can be placed in a medication bin that provides a visual alert (e.g., a high-alert sticker) to the person accessing the medication. The bin can be labeled with warnings and include materials (placed inside the bin) that should be dispensed with the drug (such as oral syringes or MedGuides).

Examples of Safe-Use Precautions

DRUG	PRECAUTIONS
Insulin	All insulin orders should be reviewed by a pharmacist prior to dispensing Standardize all insulin infusions to one concentration Develop protocols for insulin infusions, transition from infusion to SC and sliding scale orders; use standard orders for management of hypoglycemia Do not use "U" for units; always label with "units" or "units = mL," but never just "mL" If U-500 is stocked, specify conditions under which it is to be used, which product will be stocked (vials and U-500 syringes vs. pens) and how doses will be supplied; ideally U-500 should be kept in the central pharmacy
Potassium Chloride	Remove all KCl vials from floor stock Use premixed containers Use protocols for KCl delivery, including indications for IV administration, max rate of infusion, maximum allowable concentration, guidelines for when cardiac monitoring is required, a stipulation that all KCl infusions must be given via a pump, prohibition of multiple simultaneous KCl solutions (e.g., no IV KCl while KCl is infused in another IV) Allow automatic substitution of oral KCl for IV KCl, when appropriate Label all fluids containing potassium with a "Potassium Added" sticker

DRUG RECALLS

A drug recall is an action initiated by a company (either by the manufacturer's own initiative, by FDA request, or by FDA order) to remove a medication from the market due to an actual or potential health hazard (e.g., presence of contamination, product is defective). Drug recalls are categorized into three classes:

- Class I: the drug could potentially be fatal
- Class II: the drug could cause temporary adverse effects but has a low risk of being fatal
- Class III: the drug is unlikely to cause harm but violates an FDA standard (e.g., packaging, labeling)

Pharmacists are involved with developing policies outlining the process to identify recalls, remove a drug from distribution and inform prescribers/patients as necessary.

USE OF THE METRIC SYSTEM

Most healthcare organizations have a policy that requires measurements to be recorded using the metric system only. For example, prescribers should use metric units to express all weights (g, kg) and volumes (mL, L). Computer systems generally have a drop-down menu to select the correct units (e.g., lb vs. kg) and convert between units. It is critical to record the correct units since many calculations (CrCl, eGFR) and dosing checks are performed automatically by the EHR system based on the height and/or weight recorded. It is not uncommon to care for patients weighing 100 kg (or more), but serious errors can occur if this is intended to be 100 lb. Another common error is confusing "teaspoon" or "tablespoon" for milliliters (e.g., giving 3.5 tsp vs. 3.5 mL). Use of milliliters is preferred, with education to patients/caregivers.

MULTIPLE-DOSE VIALS AND PRODUCTS

A policy for the use of multiple-dose vials and products (e.g., insulin vials, inhalers) in institutional settings reduces the risk for cross-contamination (infection) and overdosing.

EMERGENCY MEDICATIONS/CRASH CARTS

Staff must be properly trained to handle emergencies and use crash cart medications. The medications should be in unit-dose packaging (i.e., contains a single dose) and be age-specific, including doses for pediatric patients. If a unit-dose medication is not available, prefilled syringes and premixed drips are best because codes are high-stress situations and mistakes are likely. A standardized drug reference sheet should be available during emergencies, including a quick reference with weight-based dosing (e.g., Broselow tape) for trays in a pediatric unit. Trained pharmacists should be present at codes when possible to facilitate appropriate medication use.

Crash carts must be stored in a secure manner to prevent tampering with medications. Breakaway tags can be used to seal crash carts as a method to monitor for tampering while also ensuring medications are readily accessible. The integrity of breakaway tags, drug expiration dates and equipment functionality (e.g., batteries remain operational, oxygen tanks are filled to the required capacity) should be monitored regularly. If used, crash carts should be replaced as soon as possible so the area is not left without required medications.

CODE BLUE

A code blue refers to a patient requiring emergency medical care, typically cardiac or respiratory arrest. The overhead announcement or paging system will provide the patient's location. The code team (often including a pharmacist) will rush to the room and begin resuscitative efforts. During the code, closed-loop communication (i.e., repeating back for verification) is used and careful documentation is completed.

TECHNOLOGY AND AUTOMATED SYSTEMS TO REDUCE ERRORS

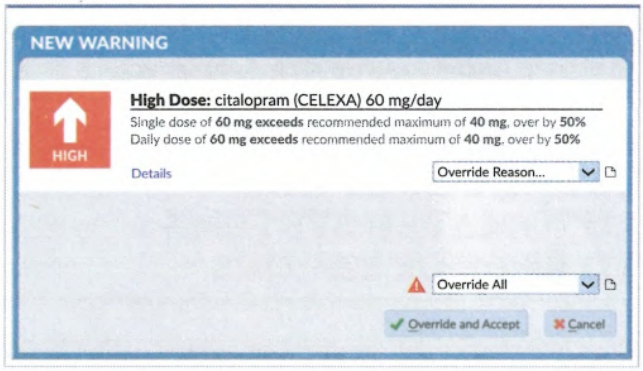
The integration of medication-related knowledge with technology and automation is called pharmacy informatics. Some of the more common systems integrated into the medication-use process are described in the sections below. Pharmacists are actively involved in creating, monitoring and improving use of these tools.

COMPUTERIZED PROVIDER ORDER ENTRY AND CLINICAL DECISION SUPPORT

Computerized physician/provider order entry (CPOE) allows direct entry of medical orders by prescribers into the computer system. This reduces errors by minimizing the ambiguity resulting from handwritten orders. A greater benefit is seen when CPOE is combined with clinical decision support (CDS) tools. Clinical guidelines and patient labs can be built into the CPOE system, and alerts can notify a prescriber if the drug is inappropriate, or if labs indicate that the drug could be unsafe (e.g., high potassium level and a new order for a potassium-sparing diuretic). For example, one of the ISMP's best practice recommendations is to program the CPOE system to default to a weekly frequency for oral methotrexate orders to prevent accidental selection of daily dosing, and require an oncologic indication to be entered for daily dosing.

CPOE can include standard order sets, clinical decision pathways and protocols (e.g., standardized initial dosing recommendations for heparin based on indication). An example of an on-screen alert from a CDS system is shown on the next page. This alert appears when a prescriber tries to order a citalopram dose > 40 mg/day. In addition to medication orders, CPOE is used for laboratory orders and procedures.

One aspect of CQI is monitoring, reporting trends and addressing alert overrides. While alerts in the EHR can help reduce errors, an overabundance of alerts can lead to alert fatigue (i.e., desensitization to alerts due to frequency or low-importance alerts, leading to excessive overrides).



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BARCODING

Barcoding may be the most important medication error reduction tool currently available. Regardless of the setting (i.e., outpatient vs. inpatient), the barcode follows the drug through the medication-use process to ensure it is properly stocked (such as in the right space in the pharmacy or in the right pocket in the dispensing cabinet), through compounding (if required) and dispensing/administration to the right patient. It also helps to prevent diversion of drugs that are commonly abused.

Studio217/Shutterstock.com

In the hospital, the barcode is used at the bedside to ensure that the correct drug (by scanning the barcode on the drug's packaging) is going to the right patient (by scanning the barcode on the patient's wristband) at the right time (by matching to the order in the system). The nurse can be signed into the electronic medical record (or scan a barcode on their name tag) while scanning, which records who administered the dose.

Barcodes are now on many infusion pumps and can prevent errors involving medications being given IV. This includes identifying drugs that are not meant to be administered via this route, auto-programming that pulls infusion parameters from the EHR (i.e., manual entry not required) and auto-documentation (which records dose/rate changes for others to review/confirm in the EHR).

When a medication is scanned and administered using barcode technology, the administration can automatically populate on the medication administration record (MAR), thus avoiding the time associated with manually charting medication administration.

AUTOMATED DISPENSING CABINETS

Common automated dispensing cabinets (ADCs) include *Pyxis, Omnicell, ScriptPro* and *Accudose*. Many hospitals utilize ADCs to replace the more labor-intensive patient cassettes, which require at least once daily filling and exchange.

PRACTICAL BENEFITS OF ADCs

Drug inventory and medication replenishment can be automated when drugs are stocked in or removed from the cabinet. ADCs provide enhanced security of controlled drugs by recording detailed information about transactions (e.g., who gained access to the controlled medications). The drugs are easily available at the unit and do not require individual delivery from the pharmacy. ADCs permit barcoding and provide alerts and usage reports.

METHODS TO IMPROVE ADC SAFETY

- TJC requires that the pharmacist review the order before the medication can be removed from the ADC for a patient, except in special circumstances (an override). The override function should be limited to a select list of medications. Overrides for medications used for reversal (e.g., naloxone, flumazenil) should be investigated to identify if new policies or staff education is needed.
- The most common error associated with ADC use is giving the wrong drug or dose to a patient. The patient's MAR should be accessible to practitioners while they are removing medications from the ADC. The use of barcode scanning improves ADC safety.

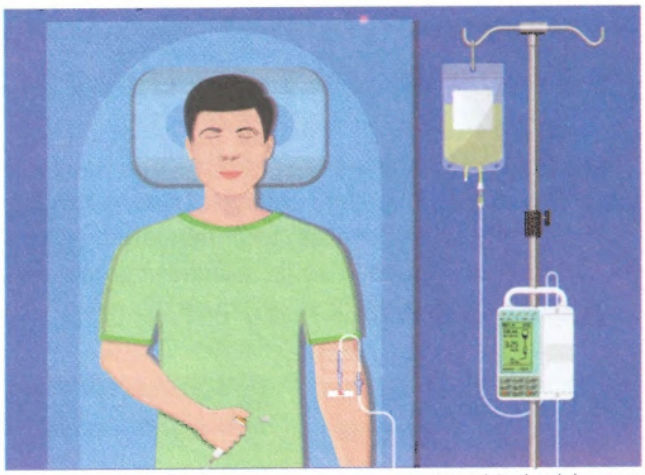
- Locked-lidded pockets provide a higher level of security and should be used for storing high-alert medications, controlled substances, reversal agents and look-alike, sound-alike medications. If open matrix drawers are utilized, medications contained in them should be limited to OTC medications.
- Look-alike, sound-alike medications should be stored in different locations within the ADC. Using computerized alerts can help reduce error risk (e.g., require confirmation when selecting drugs with high potential for mix-up).
- Certain medications should not be put into ADCs, including U-500 insulin, warfarin and high-dose narcotics (such as hydromorphone 10 mg/mL and morphine 25 mg/mL).
- Nurses should not be permitted to put medications back into the medication compartment because they might be placed in the wrong area; it is best to have a separate drawer for all "returned" drugs.

STERILE COMPOUNDING TECHNOLOGY

Several technologies have been developed to assist with reducing errors during sterile compounding (e.g., automated compounding devices, IV workflow management systems, IV robots). These should interface with the EHR to eliminate transcription errors from manual entry into one system from another. See the Sterile Compounding chapter for more information.

PATIENT CONTROLLED ANALGESIA DEVICES

Opioids are effective medications for moderate to severe post-surgical pain. They may be administered with patient-controlled analgesia (PCA) devices, where the patient can self-administer doses of medication with the push of a button (see image). The dose and dose limits are ordered by the physician. The PCA will not allow the patient to take more medication than ordered. PCAs allow the patient to treat pain quickly (there is no need to call the nurse and wait for the dose to arrive) and allow the administration of small doses, which helps reduce side effects (particularly over-sedation). PCA drug delivery can mimic the pain pattern more closely and provide good pain control. PCAs can be administered with anesthetics for a synergistic benefit.



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PCA SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

- The devices require setup and programming. This is a significant cause of preventable medication errors. PCAs should be used only by well-coordinated healthcare teams.
- Not all patients are appropriate candidates for PCA treatment. They should be cooperative and have a cognitive assessment prior to using the PCA to ensure that they can follow instructions.
- Friends and family members should not administer PCA doses. This is a TJC requirement.
- PCAs do not frequently cause respiratory depression, but the risk is present. Advanced age, obesity and concurrent use of CNS depressants (in addition to higher opioid doses) increase the risk.

PCA SAFETY STEPS

- Limit the opioids available to the patient outside of the PCA. Use standard order sets (e.g., lower set doses for opioid-naive patients or patients at risk for respiratory depression) so that safe doses of drugs are selected.
- Educate staff about HYDROmorphone and morphine mix-ups.
- Implement PCA protocols that include independent double-checking of the drug, pump setting and dosage. The concentration on the MAR should match the PCA label.
- Use barcoding technology if available for the infusion pump. Scanning the barcode on the PCA would help ensure the correct concentration is entered during PCA programming and that the right patient is getting the medication.
- Assess the patient's pain, sedation and respiratory rate on a scheduled basis.

SUMMARY OF STEPS AND SAFETY CHECKS IN THE MEDICATION USE PROCESS

These diagrams summarize common steps needed to get a medication from the drug supplier to a patient in the inpatient and outpatient settings. Underneath the steps are a list of opportunities for operational planning to incorporate safety checks and methods to reduce the risk of errors. Errors can occur at any point in the medication use process (e.g., purchasing, storage, prescribing, preparation, dispensing, administration). Multiple layers of safety checks reduce the risk of an error.

INPATIENT MEDICATION USE PROCESS

Drug ordered from supplier

- Limit available drugs to those on formulary (P&T committee)
- Limit the concentrations stocked

Drug arrives in pharmacy and is checked into inventory

- Barcode scanning ensures the correct drug was received and allows for inventory tracking

Drug added to pharmacy stock

- Separate look-alike, sound-alike drugs and use tall man lettering
- Clearly label high-alert medications

Medication order placed for patient

- CPOE and CDS decrease errors – verbal or handwritten orders can be misinterpreted
- Avoid abbreviations

Pharmacist reviews drug order

- The patient-specific dose, frequency, route and risk for drug interactions are assessed for appropriateness
- CDS provides safety double-check

Drug compounding (if needed)

- Use good compounding practices (see Compounding chapters)

Drug delivered to patient care unit

- Several routes for drug delivery
  - ❑ Drug prepared and labeled in pharmacy, checked by pharmacist, then delivered to the unit (pneumatic tube systems can be used for some medications)
  - ❑ Drug stocked by pharmacy in ADC on unit; nurse removes drug from ADC once the order is approved/verified
- Barcode scanning ensures correct drug/dose was selected for the correct patient

Drug administered to patient

- Five rights checked (typically with barcode scanning): right patient (two identifiers needed), right drug, right route, right dose, right time

ADC = automated dispensing cabinet, CDS = clinical decision support, CPOE = computerized physician/provider order entry, P&T = Pharmacy and Therapeutics

OUTPATIENT MEDICATION USE PROCESS

Drug ordered from supplier

Drug arrives in pharmacy and is checked into inventory

- Barcode scanning ensures the correct drug was received and allows for inventory tracking

Drug added to pharmacy stock

- Separate look-alike, sound-alike drugs and use tall man lettering
- High-alert medications should be labeled

Prescription is received

- CPOE and CDS decrease errors – verbal or handwritten orders can be misinterpreted
- Avoid abbreviations

Pharmacy staff processes order

- CDS provides safety double-check

Drug compounding (if needed)

- Use good compounding practices (see Compounding chapters)

Prescription filled

- Barcode scanning used to make sure the correct drug was pulled from pharmacy stock
- Drugs may be stored in an ADS in the pharmacy; drug counted and vial filled using automated technology to reduce errors

Pharmacist reviews drug order

- The patient-specific dose, frequency, route and risk for drug interactions are assessed for appropriateness
- CDS and barcode scanning provide safety double-checks

Drug dispensed to patient

- Proper counseling needed to decrease error risk
- Two identifiers needed for pick up to ensure delivery to correct recipient

ADS = automated dispensing system, CDS = clinical decision support, CPOE = computerized physician/provider order entry

INFECTION CONTROL IN HOSPITALS

More than one million infections are acquired in hospitals each year. Hospital-acquired infections cause avoidable illness and death, and add financial costs. Many states require hospitals to report infection rates, and Medicare can refuse reimbursement for hospital-acquired infections that are largely avoidable.

Antimicrobial stewardship activities have been shown to decrease the risk of nosocomial infections and antimicrobial stewardship committees are required by TJC to incorporate infection prevention and control programs that promote proper techniques effective at decreasing hospital-acquired infections. It is important to properly clean surfaces, including bed rails, eating trays and other room surfaces. Healthcare professionals should be careful not to be sources of infection from contaminated clothing (e.g., white coats, ties). Organisms that spread via surface contact include VRE, *C. difficile,* noroviruses and other intestinal tract pathogens.

COMMON TYPES OF HOSPITAL-ACQUIRED (NOSOCOMIAL) INFECTIONS

- Urinary tract infections from indwelling catheters; remove the catheter as soon as possible
- Bloodstream infections from IV lines (central lines have the highest risk) and catheters
- Surgical site infections (see Infectious Diseases II chapter)
- *Clostridioides difficile,* other GI infections
- Pneumonia (mostly due to ventilator use)

UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS TO PREVENT TRANSMISSION

Universal precautions is an approach to infection control that treats human blood and bodily fluids as if they are infected with HIV, HBV and other bloodborne pathogens. Contact with bodily fluids is avoided by wearing proper personal protective equipment (e.g., gloves, masks) and performing good hand hygiene.

The following sections describe the three categories of transmission-based precautions defined by the CDC.

CONTACT PRECAUTIONS

- To prevent transmission of infectious agents which are spread by direct and indirect contact with the patient and the patient's environment.
- Single patient rooms are preferred. If not available, keep ≥ 3 feet between beds to prevent inadvertent sharing of items between patients.
- Contact precautions are recommended for patients colonized or infected with MRSA, VRE or patients with *C. difficile* infection.
- Healthcare personnel caring for patients on contact precautions should wear a gown and gloves for all interactions that may involve contact with the patient or contaminated areas in the patient's room.

DROPLET PRECAUTIONS

- To prevent transmission of pathogens spread through close respiratory contact with respiratory secretions.
- Single patient rooms are preferred. If not available, keep ≥ 3 feet spatial separation and draw a curtain between beds for diseases transmitted via droplets.
- Droplet precautions are recommended for patients with active *B. pertussis,* influenza virus, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), adenovirus, rhinovirus, *N. meningitidis* and group A streptococcus (for the first 24 hours of antimicrobial therapy).
- Healthcare personnel caring for patients on droplet precautions should wear a mask (a respirator is not necessary).

AIRBORNE PRECAUTIONS

- To prevent transmission of infectious agents that remain infectious over long distances when suspended in the air.
- Airborne precautions are recommended for patients with active pulmonary tuberculosis, measles or varicella virus (chickenpox).
- Patients on airborne precautions should be placed in an airborne infection isolation room (AIIR). An AIIR is a single-patient room that is equipped with special air and ventilation handling systems. The air is exhausted directly to the outside or re-circulated through HEPA filtration before being returned.
- Healthcare personnel caring for patients on contact precautions should wear a mask or respirator (N95 level or higher), depending on the disease.

CATHETER-RELATED BLOODSTREAM INFECTIONS

- The most important and cost-effective strategy to minimize catheter-related bloodstream infections (CRBSI) is use of aseptic technique during catheter insertion, including proper handwashing and use of standard protocols/a catheter insertion checklist.
- It is also important to minimize use of intravascular catheters, if possible, through intravenous to oral route conversion protocols and setting appropriate time limits for catheter use. For example, peripheral catheters should be replaced every 2 – 3 days.
- Other strategies shown to reduce the risk of CRBSI include the use of skin antiseptics (2% chlorhexidine), antibiotic impregnated central venous catheters and antibiotic/ethanol lock therapy, but use must be weighed against the potential risk for increased rates of resistance.

HAND HYGIENE

Proper hand hygiene by those working in healthcare settings reduces the spread of nosocomial infection. Alcohol-based hand rubs (gel, rinse or foam) or soap and water are options; depending on the situation, one method may be preferred over the other (see the following discussion). Fingernails should be clipped short, and no jewelry should be worn under gloves, which can harbor bacteria and tear the gloves.

Antimicrobial hand soaps that contain chlorhexidine may be preferable to reduce infections in healthcare facilities. Triclosan may also be beneficial, but this compound gets into the water supply and has environmental concerns.

WHEN TO PERFORM HAND HYGIENE

- Before entering and after leaving patient rooms and between patient contacts if there is more than one patient per room.
- Before donning and after removing gloves (use new gloves with each patient).
- Before handling invasive devices, including injections.
- After coughing or sneezing.
- Before handling food and oral medications.
- Whenever hands are visibly soiled (anything noticeable on the hands)

USE SOAP AND WATER (NOT ALCOHOL-BASED RUBS) IN THESE SITUATIONS

- Before eating.
- After using the restroom.
- Whenever hands are visibly soiled.
- After caring for a patient with diarrhea, known *C. difficile* or spore-forming organisms; alcohol-based hand rubs have poor activity against spores. Handwashing with soap and water physically removes spores.
- Before caring for patients with food allergies.

SOAP AND WATER TECHNIQUE

- Wet both sides of hands, apply soap, rub together for at least 15 seconds.
- Rinse thoroughly.
- Dry with paper towel and use the towel to turn off the water.

ALCOHOL-BASED HAND RUBS TECHNIQUE

- Use enough gel (2 – 5 mL or about the size of a quarter).
- Rub hands together until the gel dries (15 – 25 seconds).
- Hands should be completely dry before putting on gloves.

HAND-HYGIENE FOR STERILE COMPOUNDING

- Refer to the Compounding chapters.

SAFE INJECTION PRACTICES

Safe injection practices prevent the reuse of syringes in multiple patients and contamination of IV bags with used syringes. See the Study Tip Gal on the next page.

If a needle-stick (percutaneous exposure) occurs with a used needle, contact the proper department at a healthcare facility immediately. If post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) is required (for HIV and/or hepatitis), acting quickly is important. PEP regimens are more likely to be effective the sooner they are started. In the outpatient setting, instruct the patient to wash the area right away with soap and water and contact their healthcare provider. See the Human Immunodeficiency Virus chapter for PEP regimens.

SAFE INJECTION PRACTICES FOR HEALTHCARE FACILITIES

- Never administer an oral solution/suspension intravenously; fatal errors have occurred. Use oral syringes (which are difficult/impossible to attach to a needle for IV injection) and label oral syringes "for oral use only."
- Never reinsert used needles into a multiple-dose vial or solution container. Single-dose vials are preferred over multiple-dose vials, especially when medications will be administered to multiple patients.
- Needles used for withdrawing blood or any other bodily fluid, or used for administering medications or other fluids should preferably have "engineered sharps protection," which reduces the risk of an exposure incident by a mechanism such as drawing the needle into the syringe barrel after use.
- Never touch the tip or plunger of a syringe to avoid contamination.
- Lancing ("fingerstick") devices should not be used in more than one patient. Ideally, glucometers should not be shared; if sharing a glucometer among multiple patients in an institutional setting, they should be cleaned and disinfected after every use.
- Disposable needles that are contaminated (e.g., with drugs, chemicals or blood products) should never be removed from their original syringes, unless no other option is available. Throw the entire needle/syringe assembly (needle attached to the syringe) into the red plastic sharps container.
- Immediately discard used disposable needles or sharps into a sharps container without recapping.
- Sharps containers should be easily accessible and not allowed to overfill; they should be routinely replaced.

SHARPS DISPOSAL

Patients who use injectable medications should have a disposal container and be instructed to put needles and other sharps in the container immediately after use (see Study Tip Gal). Sharps should be disposed of in an FDA-cleared sharps container, which is puncture resistant, labeled or color-coded appropriately, closeable and leak-proof. They are marked with a line that indicates when the container should be considered full (about ¾ full). Never compress or "push down" on the contents of any sharps container.

If an FDA-cleared container is not available, some community guidelines recommend using a heavy-duty plastic household container as an alternative (e.g., a plastic laundry detergent container). The container must be leak and puncture-resistant with a tight-fitting lid.

The entire needle/syringe assembly is discarded. The only time that recapping a needle is permitted is when the sharps container is not immediately available; in that case, use the one-hand method to recap until the sharps container can be reached:

- Place the cap on a table or counter next to something firm to push the cap against.
- Hold the syringe with the needle attached and slip the needle into the cap without using the other hand.
- Push the capped needle on the firm surface to "seat" the cap onto the needle using only the one hand.
- Sharps disposal guidelines and programs vary. The local trash removal service or health department should have the available services, and the pharmacy can provide this information to patients. Services include drop boxes or supervised collection sites (such as in a hospital, pharmacy, police or fire station), household hazardous waste collection sites, mail-back programs and residential special waste pick-up services.

MEDICATION DISPOSAL

Proper disposal of expired or unwanted medications is important to prevent environmental exposure and diversion. Methods of disposal from most preferred to least preferred include:

- Drug take back programs, which can be offered in several ways including as locations in the community that have been temporarily set up to collect medications, at authorized drug take-back locations with kiosks or drop-off boxes or through mail-back programs. Providers of drug take back services can be found on the DEA website.
- Flushing the medicine down the sink or toilet. Only medications found on the FDA's flush list can be disposed of through this method.
- Disposal in household trash. This method requires mixing the medication with an unappealing substance (e.g., dirt, cat litter, coffee grounds) in a sealable bag that can then be thrown into the garbage.

Further special instructions may be required of certain drugs such as hazardous medications (see the Compounding with Hazardous Drugs chapter), high-risk medications (e.g., fentanyl patches, which require folding the sticky sides of the patch together and immediately flushing down the toilet) and aerosol products (e.g., inhalers, which can be dangerous if punctured or thrown into a fire or incinerator). The medication package labeling can be referenced for these situations.

Select Guidelines/References

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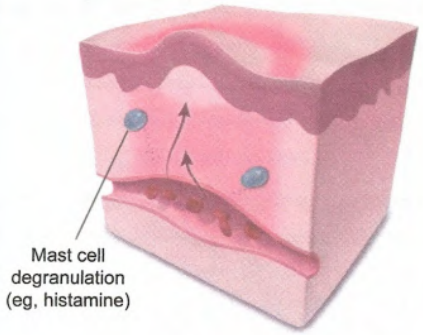

CHAPTER 76

DRUG ALLERGIES & ADVERSE DRUG REACTIONS

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= Study Tip Gal = Key Drugs Guy

BACKGROUND

Adverse drug reaction (ADR) is a term that encompasses all unintended pharmacologic effects of a drug when it is administered correctly and used at recommended doses. ADRs should not be confused with medication errors, which can include overdose and administration mistakes, and are discussed in the Medication Safety & Quality Improvement chapter. ADRs result in substantial morbidity and mortality, and ADR reports are increasing; over one million reports with serious outcomes (including over 150,000 deaths) are logged with the FDA each year.

Although side effects or adverse effects can occur in anyone, some patients are more susceptible than others. For example, some degree of renal damage can occur with use of an aminoglycoside for longer than seven days. However, in patients with underlying renal impairment, nephrotoxicity is more likely to occur and may happen after a shorter duration of treatment.

DEFINITIONS

Mild or Severe Reactions to Histamine Release

Urticaria (hives)
A rash with red/pinkish raised patches. The patches have varied shapes and sizes.

Pruritus (itching)
Any rash or reaction that causes itching can be referred to as pruritus.

Erythema
Redness on the skin from superficial (near the surface) capillaries, often due to inflammation with pruritus. When pressed down, the red skin will blanch (whiten) temporarily because the blood flow is blocked. Erythematous refers to an area on the skin, such as a patch, with erythema.

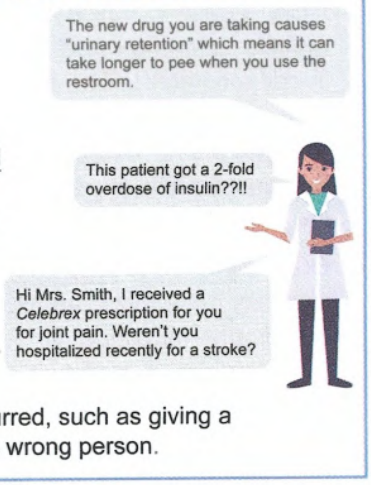
Angioedema
Swelling caused by edema in the deeper dermal, cutaneous and submucosal tissue.

Morbilliform
Macular or maculopapular rash (or both), with 1-10 mm lesions and healthy skin between the lesions.

ADVERSE DRUG REACTIONS VS. ERRORS

Adverse Drug Reaction (ADR)
Effects from a drug when it is administered correctly. ADRs are typically dose-related; the ADR severity increases with higher doses/reduced clearance.

Medication Error
Something wrong occurred, such as giving a medication dose to the wrong person.



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ADVERSE DRUG REACTIONS

ADRs are categorized as: predictable (type A) and unpredictable (type B) reactions.

TYPE A REACTIONS

Type A reactions are dose-dependent, related to the known pharmacologic properties of the drug, can occur in any patient and can range from mild to severe. Type A reactions are most common and account for an estimated 85% of ADRs. Examples of type A reactions:

- Orthostatic hypotension with doxazosin (minimized and/or prevented by dose titration).
- Nephrotoxicity with aminoglycosides.
- Tachycardia with albuterol.

TYPE B REACTIONS

Type B reactions are not dose-dependent, are unrelated to the pharmacologic actions of the drug and can be influenced by patient-specific factors (e.g., genetics). The majority of type B reactions are caused by exposure to the active ingredient, but excipients (inactive ingredients) can be implicated too. Type B reactions are categorized as immediate (occurring within 60 minutes after exposure) or delayed (occurring days to months after exposure).

Type B reactions include:

- Drug allergies, which are reactions that have a definite immune mechanism (e.g., antibody- or T cell-mediated). The types of drug allergies are described in the box on the next page. In general, allergies are not hereditary (e.g., if a patient's mother has anaphylaxis to penicillin, it does not mean that the patient cannot receive penicillin).
- Drug hypersensitivity reactions (DHRs), which clinically resemble drug allergy but may or may not be immune-mediated. DHRs do not always require contraindication to future administration, such as histamine release if vancomycin is infused too quickly. DHRs can be linked to genetics, such as reactions that occur with human leukocyte antigen (HLA) alleles (see Pharmacogenomics chapter).
- Idiosyncratic reactions, which arise from genetic differences (e.g., select medications are more likely to cause drug-induced hemolytic anemia in patients with G6PD deficiency).

TYPES OF DRUG ALLERGIES

Type I Reactions - Immediate
- IgE-mediated, ranging from minor local reactions to severe systemic reactions
  - Examples: urticaria, bronchospasm, angioedema, anaphylaxis

Type II Reactions - Delayed
- Antibody-mediated, usually occurring 5-8 days after exposure
  - Examples: hemolytic anemia, thrombocytopenia

Type III Reactions - Delayed
- Immune-complex reactions, occurring ≥ 1 week after exposure
  - Example: serum sickness

Type IV Reactions - Delayed
- T cell-mediated, occurring 48 hours to weeks after exposure
  - Example: Stevens-Johnson syndrome

INTOLERANCES AND IDIOSYNCRATIC REACTIONS

CHARACTERIZING AN ADVERSE DRUG REACTION

When patients report an adverse drug reaction, pharmacists must ask the right questions to determine whether an adverse reaction is an intolerance or a drug allergy:

- What reaction occurred (e.g., mild rash, severe rash with blisters, trouble breathing)?
- When did it occur? About how old were you?
- Can you use similar drugs in the class? For example, for a penicillin allergy, ask if cephalexin has ever been used.
- Do you have any food allergies or a latex allergy?

INTOLERANCE OR ALLERGY?

Gather enough information to determine the type of reaction.

Example: A patient reports getting a stomach ache from varenicline.

Scenarios:
I did not eat anything until dinner because varenicline made me nauseous. (Intolerance)

I got nauseous, felt dizzy and had trouble breathing. (Allergy)

Intolerances are less serious complaints, such as nausea or constipation. Since the drug bothers the patient, it should be avoided, if possible.

Allergies are an immune system response and range from mild (e.g., pruritus) to severe (e.g., anaphylaxis). Allergies can present in different ways, for example:
- Facial swelling, bronchoconstriction and/or drop in BP
- Weakness, fever and severe rash

STOMACH UPSET/NAUSEA

Stomach upset or nausea (in the absence of other hypersensitivity symptoms) is often incorrectly reported as an allergy. It should be listed on the patient profile because the drug bothered the patient and, if possible, should be avoided in the future, but this is not an allergy and should not prevent drugs in the same class from being used. This is more accurately categorized as an intolerance. Electronic medical records allow for documentation of intolerances separate from allergies. An example of an intolerance is a patient who has stomach upset with codeine (but not hydrocodone or other opioids) or erythromycin (but not azithromycin).

EXAMPLE: INTOLERANCE REPORTED INCORRECTLY AS A DRUG ALLERGY

CG received acetaminophen 300 mg/codeine 30 mg for pain relief after a dental extraction. She got very nauseated from the medication. When she was admitted to the hospital several years later for a left hip replacement, she reported that she was "allergic" to codeine. The reaction was not clarified, which led the physician to order fentanyl with a patient-controlled analgesia device for postoperative pain control, instead of hydrocodone. The prescriber used a less desirable option for pain control because of the reported allergy.

PHOTOSENSITIVITY

Photosensitivity can occur when sunlight reacts with a drug in the skin and causes tissue damage that looks like a severe sunburn on sun-exposed areas; this occurs within hours of sun exposure.

When dispensing medications that can cause photosensitivity (see Key Drugs Guy below), it is important to advise the patient and/or their caregivers to limit sun exposure and to use broad-spectrum sunscreen that blocks both UVA and UVB radiation.

DRUGS MOST ASSOCIATED WITH PHOTOSENSITIVITY

KEY DRUGS

- Amiodarone
- Diuretics (thiazide and loop)
- Methotrexate
- Oral and topical retinoids
- Quinolones
- St. John's wort
- Sulfa drugs
- Tacrolimus
- Tetracyclines
- Voriconazole

Others:

- Antihistamines (1st generation)
- Chloroquine
- Coal tar
- Fluorouracil
- Griseofulvin
- NSAIDs
- Quinidine
- Tigecycline

THROMBOTIC THROMBOCYTOPENIC PURPURA

Thrombotic thrombocytopenic purpura (TTP), sometimes referred to as drug-induced thrombotic microangiopathy (DITMA), is a blood disorder in which clots form throughout the body. The clotting process consumes platelets and leads to bleeding under the skin and the formation of purpura (bruises) and petechiae (dots) on the skin. TTP can be fatal and should be treated immediately with plasma exchange. Common drugs that can cause TTP include oral P2Y12 inhibitors (e.g., clopidogrel) and sulfamethoxazole.

SPOTS AND RASHES

Papules Raised spots

Macules Flat spots

Purpura
Red/purple skin spots (lesions) due to bleeding underneath the skin. Purpura includes small and large spots:

Petechiae Pinpoint in size

Ecchymosis Large bruised area

Purpura, with petechiae and ecchymoses (TTP rash)
National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute; National Institutes of Health; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Hematoma
A collection of blood under the skin due to trauma (injury) to a blood vessel, resulting in blood leaking into the surrounding tissue. Drugs that can cause a hematoma include heparin, low molecular weight heparin (LMWH), other anticoagulants and phytonadione (vitamin K) if given as an IM injection.

Hematoma
SneSivan/Shutterstock.com

DRUG HYPERSENSITIVITY REACTIONS AND ALLERGIES

This section describes specific drug hypersensitivity and allergic reactions and their treatment, but keep in mind that similar treatment can be used for non-drug allergies, including food allergies (e.g., soy, peanut). All allergies should be noted in the patient medical record, including latex allergies because some drugs require tubing, have latex vial stoppers or require gloves for administration.

Anyone with severe drug or food allergies should wear a medical identification bracelet to alert emergency responders. A reaction without breathing difficulty can sometimes be treated by stopping the offending

drug. Antihistamines can be used to counteract the histamine release that causes itching, swelling and rash. Systemic steroids, and sometimes NSAIDs, can be used to decrease swelling. Severe swelling may necessitate a steroid injection. Epinephrine is used to reverse bronchoconstriction if the patient is wheezing or has other signs of breathing trouble.

NON-IMMUNE DRUG HYPERSENSITIVITY REACTIONS

Many drugs can cause reactions that clinically mimic drug allergy, but are not immune-mediated. These can be both immediate and delayed in onset. Examples:

- Opioids can cause a non-IgE-mediated release of histamine from mast cells in the skin, causing itching and hives. This is particularly apparent after inpatient surgery, when opioid-naïve patients receive them or when non-naïve patients receive higher than normal doses. This type of reaction, if not severe, can be reduced or avoided by premedicating with an antihistamine, such as diphenhydramine.
- Vancomycin, when infused too rapidly, can cause a direct release of histamine from cutaneous mast cells, causing flushing, hives and sometimes hypotension. In most cases, this reaction can be avoided by slowing the infusion rate.

HUMAN LEUKOCYTE ANTIGEN-ASSOCIATED HYPERSENSITIVITY REACTIONS

For some drugs, the presence of specific HLA alleles increases the risk of delayed-type hypersensitivity syndromes. Reactions range from severe cutaneous adverse reactions (described below) to drug-specific syndromes. For example, patients positive for HLA-B*5701 are at an increased risk for abacavir hypersensitivity, which is a unique syndrome that presents with fever, malaise, gastrointestinal or respiratory symptoms and rash. See the Pharmacogenomics chapter for other medications with HLA-specific testing recommendations.

SEVERE CUTANEOUS ADVERSE REACTIONS

There are several severe cutaneous adverse reactions (SCARs) that can be caused by drugs, including Stevens-Johnson syndrome (SJS), toxic epidermal necrolysis (TEN) and drug reaction with eosinophilia and systemic symptoms (DRESS). All of these are categorized as delayed drug allergies. They can be life-threatening and require prompt treatment. While many drugs have SCARs listed in their prescribing information, the drugs most commonly associated with these reactions are listed in the Key Drugs Guy below.

STEVENS-JOHNSON SYNDROME AND TOXIC EPIDERMAL NECROLYSIS

Patient with Stevens-Johnson syndrome
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SJS and TEN involve epidermal detachment and skin loss that is equivalent to third-degree burns. They generally occur 1 – 3 weeks after drug exposure and can result in severe mucosal erosions, a high body temperature, major fluid loss and organ damage (eyes, liver, kidney, lungs).

SJS and TEN are commonly classified by the percent of skin detachment. The key to treating both is to stop the offending agent as soon as possible, replace fluids and electrolytes, perform wound care and administer pain medications. Systemic steroids are contraindicated with TEN, but may be used for SJS, though the benefit is controversial. Due to the severity of mucosal involvement, antibiotics are often necessary to prevent or treat an infection. A history of SJS/TEN to a medication is a contraindication to receiving it again.

DRUGS MOST ASSOCIATED WITH SEVERE CUTANEOUS ADVERSE REACTIONS

KEY DRUGS

- Allopurinol
- Amoxicillin
- Ampicillin
- Carbamazepine
- Ethosuximide
- Lamotrigine
- Nevirapine
- Phenytoin
- Sulfamethoxazole
- Sulfasalazine
- Vancomycin

Others:

- Amiodarone
- Etravirine
- Fosphenytoin
- Isoniazid
- Macrolides
- Minocycline
- Olanzapine
- Oxcarbazepine
- Phenobarbital
- Piroxicam
- Quinine
- Quinolones
- Rifampin
- Terbinafine

DRUG REACTION WITH EOSINOPHILIA AND SYSTEMIC SYMPTOMS (DRESS)

DRESS can include a variety of skin eruptions accompanied by systemic symptoms such as fever, hepatic dysfunction, renal dysfunction and lymphadenopathy, but it rarely involves mucosal surfaces. Treatment consists of stopping the offending drug, although symptoms may continue to worsen for a period of time after the drug has been discontinued.

ANAPHYLAXIS

Anaphylaxis is a severe, life-threatening allergic reaction that usually happens within 1 hour of drug exposure, and involves multiple organs (most commonly skin/mucosal tissue, and cardiovascular, respiratory and gastrointestinal systems). Anaphylaxis typically occurs after an initial exposure and subsequent immune response, but some drugs can cause anaphylaxis with the first exposure. A patient experiencing anaphylaxis usually has a combination of symptoms, including generalized urticaria (hives), swelling of the mouth and throat, difficulty breathing or wheezing sounds, severe gastrointestinal symptoms (e.g., repetitive vomiting, severe abdominal cramping) and/or hypotension (which can cause dizziness, lightheadedness or loss of consciousness). Because symptoms can develop quickly, treatment must be administered immediately.

ANAPHYLAXIS TREATMENT

Anaphylactic reactions require immediate emergency medical care. The patient or family should be instructed to call 911 if anaphylaxis occurs. Treatment includes epinephrine ± diphenhydramine ± steroids ± IV fluids. To avoid blocking the airway, nothing should be placed under the head or in the mouth. Swollen airways can be quickly fatal.

Patients with a history of anaphylaxis (particularly to foods or insect bites) should carry a single-use epinephrine auto-injector *(EpiPen, EpiPen Jr, Auvi-Q, Symjepi* or a generic equivalent) or epinephrine nasal spray *(Neffy)* as they may be at future risk. Epinephrine auto-injectors are generally available as epinephrine 1 mg/mL (previously labeled as 1:1000) in doses of 0.3 mg (adult dose) or 0.15 mg (pediatric dose). The 0.15 mg dose is for patients 15 – 30 kg. *Auvi-Q* is also available in 0.1 mg (for patients weighing 7.5 – 14 kg). The patient's emergency kit should also include emergency contact information and diphenhydramine tablets (25 mg × 2), which should be taken only if there is no tongue/lip swelling.

KEY COUNSELING POINTS FOR EPINEPHRINE AUTO-INJECTORS

- Tell family, caregivers and others where the epinephrine auto-injector is kept and how to use it, as you may not be able to speak in an emergency.
- It is important to keep the thumb, fingers and hand away from the needle end of the device, as accidental injection can cause vasoconstriction and necrosis.
- When injecting an uncooperative child, hold the leg firmly to avoid bending or breaking the needle.
- Skin infections can occur. Report any prolonged redness, swelling, warmth or tenderness at the injection site.

For *Symjepi:*

- Pull off the cap, holding the syringe with the fingers (avoiding the needle).
- Inject in the middle of the outer thigh, hold needle firmly in place for two seconds, then massage area for 10 seconds.
- After injection, slide the safety guard out over the needle.

For *Auvi-Q:*

- Pull off the outer case, then follow the voice instructions to administer. Hold the needle firmly in place on the thigh for five seconds.

EPINEPHRINE AUTO-INJECTOR ADMINISTRATION

EpiPen:

- Remove from the carrying case and pull off the blue safety release.
- Keep thumb, fingers and hand away from the orange (needle) end of the device.
- To inject, jab the orange end into the middle of the outer thigh at a 90 degree angle.
- Hold the needle firmly in place while counting to 3.
- Remove the needle and massage the area for 10 seconds.
- After the injection, the orange tip will extend to cover the needle. If the needle is visible, it should not be reused.

All epinephrine auto-injectors:

- It is normal to see liquid remaining in the device after injecting.
- Call for emergency help because additional care may be needed.
- A second dose (in the opposite leg) may be given, if needed, prior to the arrival of medical help.
- Refrigeration is not required.
- All products can be injected through clothing.
- Check the device periodically to make sure the medication is clear and not expired.

COMMON DRUGS ASSOCIATED WITH ALLERGIC REACTIONS

While any drug can lead to an allergic reaction, some are known to do so more than others. Drugs that commonly cause allergies are discussed below. Often the drug that caused a reaction can be replaced with another drug. Patch testing performed in the outpatient setting by an allergist is a reliable way to determine if a person is truly allergic to a drug.

BETA-LACTAMS

Beta-lactam antibiotics (includes several classes) are the most commonly implicated medications in drug allergies. Reactions range from mild rash to anaphylaxis and severe delayed reactions (e.g., SJS).

Penicillins have many related compounds within the class (e.g., ampicillin, piperacillin). Anyone who is allergic to one is typically presumed to be allergic to others in the class. In such cases, the entire class should be avoided, unless they have been evaluated by a healthcare provider.

Cephalosporins and carbapenems are structurally related to penicillin. A penicillin allergy history carries a small risk of experiencing an allergic reaction to a cephalosporin or carbapenem. While the risk of cross-reactivity is low, on the NAPLEX, beta-lactams should be avoided with a stated allergy to another beta-lactam. A notable exception is in acute otitis media (AOM); the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends a 2nd- or 3rd-generation cephalosporin in patients with a non-severe penicillin allergy (e.g., delayed-onset mild rash), due to the toxicities and decreased efficacy of alternative AOM therapies in children (see the Infectious Diseases II chapter). Aztreonam (a monobactam) is considered safe in patients with an immediate-type penicillin allergy.

Beta-lactams can cause a delayed-onset mild rash (benign exanthem), often described as morbilliform and/or maculopapular in appearance. In the absence of other severe symptoms of anaphylaxis, this mild rash is not a contraindication to receiving the drug again or drugs from similar classes.

A PENICILLIN ALLERGY, OR NOT?

Although 10% of people report a penicillin "allergy," the CDC reports the true incidence of IgE-mediated (type I hypersensitivity) reactions to penicillin as < 1%. When a "penicillin allergy" is reported, other broad-spectrum antibiotics are often used, which increases resistance, cost and possible side effects. When allergies are disproven (by skin testing or by comprehensive allergy history review), the allergy label in the medical record should be removed.

For immediate-type reactions (e.g., anaphylaxis), a skin test can assess risk:

- Patients with a negative result should be given an oral drug "challenge" dose before the full treatment dose.
- Patients with a positive test should avoid the drug.
  - Remember: penicillin is the only acceptable treatment in pregnant or non-adherent patients with syphilis. If a skin test is positive, temporarily desensitize and administer penicillin.
- Skin testing should not be performed for severe cutaneous adverse reactions (e.g., SJS/TEN).

Many cephalosporins can be safely tolerated in patients with a mild penicillin allergy. In acute otitis media patients with an allergy to penicillin/amoxicillin, give cefdinir, cefpodoxime, ceftriaxone or cefuroxime.

SULFA DRUGS

Sulfa reactions are most commonly reported with sulfamethoxazole (in *Bactrim)*. Other drugs that should be avoided in patients with a sulfa allergy include sulfasalazine and sulfadiazine.

The package labeling for "non-arylamine" sulfonamides [thiazide diuretics, loop diuretics (except ethacrynic acid), sulfonylureas, acetazolamide, zonisamide and celecoxib], as well as cidofovir, darunavir, fosamprenavir and tipranavir contain warnings or contraindications for use in patients with a sulfa allergy, but in practice the risk of cross-reactivity with sulfamethoxazole is low. Even so, the patient should be aware to watch for a possible reaction and on the NAPLEX, drugs with a possible risk for causing a reaction should be recognized. Sulfite or sulfate allergies do not cross-react with sulfonamides.

OPIOIDS

Opioid hypersensitivity reactions due to histamine release are common; however, a true opioid allergy is uncommon. Antihistamines can be used to reduce or avoid non-severe reactions thought to be due to histamine release. See the Pain chapter for information on treatment options in patients with opioid allergies.

HEPARIN

See the Anticoagulation chapter for information on heparin-induced thrombocytopenia (HIT).

BIOLOGICS

Biologics (e.g., rituximab) can cause hypersensitivity reactions and other ADRs. Desensitization to some drugs is possible in patients who need a biologic and have had a prior reaction. See the next page for more information regarding desensitization procedures.

ASPIRIN AND NSAIDS

Aspirin and NSAIDS can cause many different types of hypersensitivity reactions, most commonly respiratory (e.g., asthma, rhinorrhea) and urticaria/angioedema. Up to 20% of patients with asthma are sensitive to aspirin and other NSAIDs. Aspirin should be avoided in patients with a history of asthma, nasal polyps and prior respiratory reactions to NSAIDs.

RADIOCONTRAST MEDIA

Radiocontrast media (used in some imaging studies) can cause immediate and delayed hypersensitivity reactions, which can be immune- or non-immune-mediated. The type of radiocontrast agent used and patient-specific factors (e.g., asthma history) influences the frequency and severity of these reactions.

PEANUTS AND SOY

Patients with peanut allergies should have at-home access to epinephrine. An oral immunotherapy [peanut allergen powder *(Palforzia)*] can mitigate allergic reactions to peanuts, including anaphylaxis. Soy is used in some medications; peanuts and soy can have cross-reactivity. Drugs that are contraindicated with a soy allergy include clevidipine and propofol.

EGGS

If a patient has a true allergy to eggs, they cannot use clevidipine, propofol or the yellow fever vaccine (eggs are used in vaccine production). For influenza vaccines, ACIP states that even patients who have had severe symptoms when consuming eggs can receive any indicated inactivated vaccine (though *Flublok* and *Flucelvax* are egg-free options). If a severe reaction to an influenza vaccine occurs, the patient should not receive further doses of any influenza vaccine. For further discussion, refer to the Immunizations chapter.

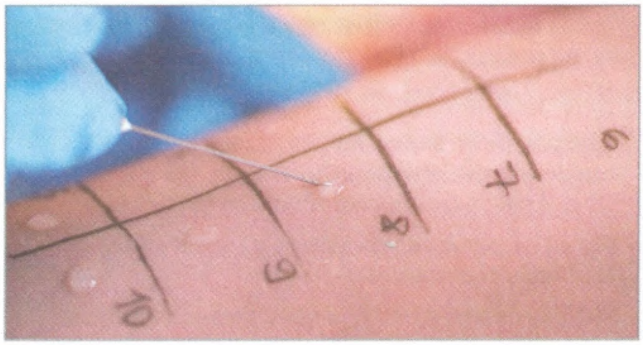
SKIN TESTING, DESENSITIZATION AND DELABELING ALLERGIES

PENICILLIN SKIN TESTING

Some patients report a penicillin "allergy" when their reaction was more properly categorized as an intolerance (e.g., nausea, diarrhea). In other cases, patients may have had a true allergic reaction to penicillin in the past, but over time, the antibodies can wane and the patient may be able to safely receive penicillins. Due to concerns of cross-reactivity with cephalosporins and carbapenems, a penicillin allergy can severely limit the selection of antibiotics available to treat infectious diseases, leading to use of broad-spectrum antibiotics that have an increased risk for *C. difficile* (e.g., quinolones) or other toxicities (e.g., vancomycin). The goal of penicillin skin testing is to identify patients who are at the greatest risk of a type I hypersensitivity reaction if exposed to a systemic penicillin.

The penicillin skin test uses the components of penicillin that most often cause an immune (allergic) response, such as the diagnostic agent *Pre-Pen* (benzylpenicilloyl polylysine injection), with very dilute solutions of penicillin G. A step-wise skin test is performed, beginning with a skin prick test followed by intradermal testing. This process includes a positive control (histamine) and negative control (saline) for comparison.

A localized reaction around the *Pre-Pen* or penicillin G test site larger than the negative control indicates a high risk of a reaction to systemic penicillin and the patient should not receive it. A patient with a negative skin test (no reaction to the test solution) is then given an oral drug challenge and, if tolerated, the patient can safely receive penicillin. Skin testing is only appropriate for suspected IgE-mediated reactions. Skin testing is contraindicated for severe delayed reactions (e.g., SJS or TEN) and patients should not be challenged.



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TEMPORARY INDUCTION OF DRUG TOLERANCE (DESENSITIZATION)

In many cases when a drug allergy is present, an alternative medication can be chosen. When no acceptable alternative is available, induction of drug tolerance (often referred to as desensitization) may be recommended. For example, if a pregnant patient has syphilis and a penicillin allergy, the CDC recommends desensitization and penicillin treatment (see the Infectious Diseases II chapter).

Desensitization is a step-wise process that begins by administering a very small dose of the medication and then incrementally increasing the dose at regular intervals up to a target dose. This modifies the patient's response to the medication and temporarily allows safe treatment. The desensitization procedure must take place in a medical setting where emergency care can be provided if a serious reaction occurs. Treatment with the drug must start immediately following desensitization and must not be interrupted. If doses are missed, the drug-free period allows the immune system to re-sensitize to the drug and serious hypersensitivity reactions (including anaphylaxis) could occur with subsequent doses.

Desensitization does not "cure" the patient of an allergy, and the reaction should not be removed from the patient's medical record. If the drug is required on a separate occasion, the desensitization process must be repeated. Desensitization protocols exist for a number of antimicrobials, some biologics and a few other medications (e.g., aspirin). Desensitization should never be attempted if a drug has previously caused SJS or TEN.

DELABELING ALLERGIES

Patients with allergy labels on their profile are often prescribed less effective and more expensive antibiotics, which is linked to worse outcomes and higher healthcare costs. When allergies are found to be disproven (by skin testing, drug challenge or otherwise), the allergy label should be removed from the patient's profile (known as "delabeling"). Patients should be counseled so that disproven allergies are not re-added to the profile at a future encounter. This practice should help improve treatment of future infections and reduce costs.

ASSESSING CAUSALITY OF AN ADVERSE DRUG REACTION

When an ADR occurs, the Naranjo Scale (a validated causality assessment scale) can help determine the likelihood that a drug caused the adverse reaction. Based on the questionnaire, a probability score is calculated. A score ≥ 9 = definite ADR; 5 – 8 = probable ADR; 1 – 4 = possible ADR; 0 = doubtful ADR.

QUESTION	YES	NO	DO NOT KNOW
Are there previous conclusive reports on this reaction?	+1	0	0
Did the adverse event appear after the suspected drug was given?	+2	–1	0
Did the adverse reaction improve when the drug was discontinued or a specific antagonist was given?	+1	0	0
Did the adverse reaction appear when the drug was readministered?	+2	–1	0
Are there alternative causes that could (on their own) have caused the reaction?	–1	+2	0
Did the reaction reappear when a placebo was given?	–1	+1	0
Was the drug detected in any body fluid in toxic concentrations?	+1	0	0
Was the reaction more severe when the dose was increased or less severe when the dose was decreased?	+1	0	0
Did the patient have a similar reaction to the same or similar drugs in any previous exposure?	+1	0	0
Was the adverse event confirmed by any objective evidence?	+1	0	0

ADR REPORTING

Side effects, adverse events and allergies to drugs, biologics, medical devices, nutritional products and some cosmetics should be reported to the FDA Adverse Event Reporting System (FAERS, also known as the FDA MedWatch program). Vaccine reactions are reported under a different program called VAERS (see the Immunizations chapter for more information).

When drugs are studied in clinical trials, high-risk patients are typically excluded, though in a real-life setting, high-risk patients may receive the medication. The FDA can require Phase IV trials (post-marketing safety surveillance programs) for approved drugs and biologics, to collect and analyze ADR reports and better understand a drug's safety profile in a real-world setting. Post-marketing reports also help identify side effects that occur less frequently. If a drug causes a reaction in 1 out of every 3,000 people, the problem may not be apparent in a smaller clinical trial. For this reason, community-based ADR reporting is critical.

EXAMPLE: ADR INCIDENCE IN REAL LIFE VS. A CLINICAL TRIAL

When spironolactone was studied in the RALES trial, patients with renal insufficiency or elevated potassium levels were excluded due to the known risk of hyperkalemia from the use of spironolactone. The drug was found to have benefit in patients with advanced heart failure so doctors in the community began to use it. In this real-life setting, patients with renal insufficiency or elevated potassium were occasionally prescribed spironolactone, and arrhythmias and sudden death due to hyperkalemia were reported.

EXAMPLE: ADR REPORTS LEAD TO FDA REQUIREMENT FOR SAFETY LABELING CHANGES

Oseltamivir was initially marketed without a warning of unusual behavior in children. The FDA received enough reports that they issued a warning in 2006. In 2008, after many more reports, the FDA required the manufacturer to update the prescribing information to include a precaution about hallucinations, confusion and other strange behavior in children.

Reporting is voluntary but has important implications for safe medication use. Healthcare professionals and patients can report adverse events to the drug manufacturer, who is required by law to send the report to the FDA. The MedWatch form used for reporting can be found online. Reports can also be made by calling the FDA directly.

If the FDA receives enough reports that a drug is linked to a particular problem, the manufacturer can be required to update the labeling (e.g., package insert). In especially risky cases, a drug safety alert is issued to prescribers, usually before the labeling is changed.

FDA TOOLS TO REDUCE ADVERSE DRUG REACTIONS

BOXED WARNINGS

A boxed warning indicates a risk of death or permanent disability from a drug (e.g., increased risk of venous thromboembolism and death from stroke with raloxifene).

The risk of fatality can be due to prescribing or dispensing errors. For example, conventional amphotericin B deoxycholate has a boxed warning not to exceed 1.5 mg/kg. Fatalities have been caused by using the lipid amphotericin dosing (typically 3 – 6 mg/kg) for conventional amphotericin, resulting in a more than two-fold overdose.

CONTRAINDICATIONS, WARNINGS AND PRECAUTIONS

Contraindications indicate that the drug cannot be used in that patient. The risk will outweigh any possible benefit (e.g., a history of venous thromboembolism is a contraindication to the use of raloxifene). If there are no known contraindications for a drug, the section of the package insert will state "None."

Mrs. Jones, you cannot get raloxifene because you had a DVT in the past.

Warnings and precautions include serious reactions that can result in death, hospitalization, medical intervention, disability or teratogenicity (e.g., raloxifene has a warning for venous thromboembolism). These may or may not change a prescribing decision.

Mrs. Smith, you could get a DVT from raloxifene if you are immobile most of the day.

ADVERSE REACTIONS

Adverse reactions are undesirable or dangerous effects from a drug (e.g., arthralgia from raloxifene). The risk-benefit assessment is patient-specific (e.g., arthralgia from raloxifene will be more of a concern in a patient with chronically sore joints versus a patient with no sore joints).

Mrs. Ngo, you are starting raloxifene. You might get hot flashes and achy joints.

RISK EVALUATION AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES

Risk Evaluation and Mitigation Strategies (REMS) are required by the FDA for some drugs. They are developed by the manufacturer and approved by the FDA to ensure the benefits of a drug outweigh the risks. REMS programs can include a medication guide, patient package insert, communication plan, elements to assure safe use or an implementation system.

For example, the REMS for a drug could require prescribers or pharmacies to have a special certification to prescribe or dispense the drug, enroll patients in a registry so that ADRs can be tracked or evaluate lab tests before dispensing. Examples include the isotretinoin iPLEDGE program, the REMS to reduce misuse of long-acting opioids and the REMS for endothelin receptor antagonists.

MEDICATION GUIDES

Medication Guides (or MedGuides) are FDA-approved patient handouts that detail a drug's important adverse events in non-technical language; they are considered part of the drug's labeling. If a medication has a MedGuide, it must be dispensed with the original prescription and with each refill. It is not necessary to dispense a drug's MedGuide for hospitalized patients because the patient is being monitored, though the MedGuide should be available to the patient or family upon request.

MedGuides are required for many individual drugs and, in some cases, entire classes of medications (e.g., anticonvulsants, antidepressants, long-acting opioids, NSAIDs, ADHD stimulants).

Select Guidelines/References

Food and Drug Administration MedWatch program http://www.fda.gov/Safety/MedWatch/ (accessed 2025 Mar 17)

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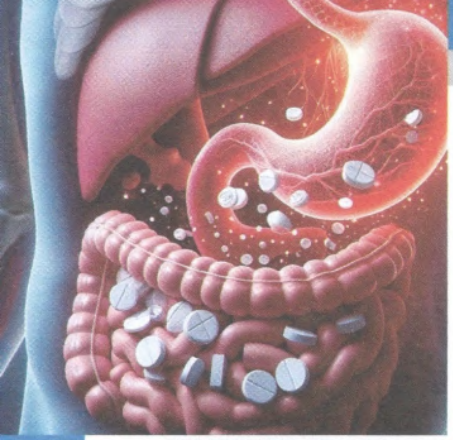

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CHAPTER 77

PHARMACOKINETICS

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= Study Tip Gal = Required Formula

BACKGROUND

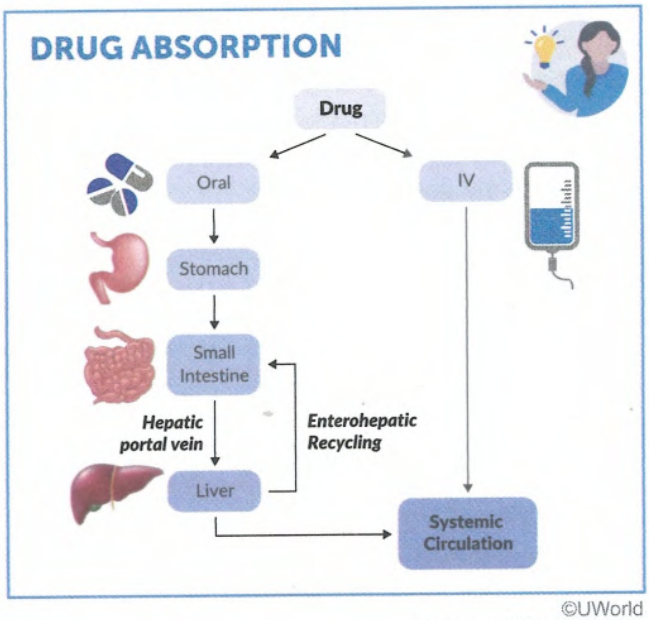
Pharmacokinetics is what the human body does to a drug during the processes of drug absorption, distribution, metabolism and excretion (often abbreviated ADME). Mathematical relationships are used to describe these processes, which clinicians use to assess drug levels and optimize drug therapy. Pharmacodynamics, what the drug does to the human body, refers to the relationship between the drug concentration at the site of action, and both therapeutic and adverse effects.

ABSORPTION

If a drug is given intravascularly (e.g., intravenously, intra-arterially), absorption is not required because the drug enters directly into the bloodstream (systemic circulation). If a drug is administered extravascularly, drug absorption occurs as the drug moves from the site of administration to the bloodstream (see Study Tip Gal). Some examples of drug formulations with extravascular administration include oral, sublingual, buccal, intramuscular, subcutaneous, transdermal, inhaled, topical, ocular, intraocular, intrathecal and rectal products.

When a drug is given orally, it passes from the stomach to the intestine. Most oral drug absorption occurs in the small intestine because of the large surface area and permeable membrane. After gut absorption, the drug enters the portal vein and travels to the liver. Some drugs are extensively metabolized in the liver before reaching the systemic circulation; this is called first-pass metabolism (discussed later). Some drugs are transported through the bile back to the gut where they can be reabsorbed. This is called enterohepatic recycling (see the Drug Interactions chapter).

Absorption of oral drugs occurs via two primary processes: passive diffusion across the gut wall or active transport. Passive diffusion is movement of drugs from an area of high concentration (e.g., the gut lumen) to an area of lower concentration (e.g., the blood). Energy is not required for passive diffusion. Active transport occurs when drugs are moved across the gut wall via transporter proteins that are normally used to absorb nutrients from food.



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LOCAL VS. SYSTEMIC EFFECTS

Drugs administered extravascularly can be divided into two categories: drugs intended for local effects and drugs intended for systemic effects. Drugs intended for local effects are often applied topically where the drug effect is needed. Examples include eye drops for glaucoma (e.g., latanoprost), dermal preparations for psoriasis (e.g., coal tar preparations) and nasal sprays for allergies (e.g., fluticasone nasal spray). Topical administration of a drug can minimize systemic toxicity due to lower systemic exposure.

Drugs intended for systemic effects are formulated to facilitate some percentage of drug absorption from the site of administration into the circulatory system. Examples include oral tablets for seasonal allergies (e.g., loratadine), suppositories for fever (e.g., acetaminophen), sublingual tablets for angina (e.g., nitroglycerin SL) and transdermal patches for pain (e.g., fentanyl patch).

DISINTEGRATION, DISSOLUTION AND DRUG SOLUBILITY

When a solid oral dosage form is ingested, it breaks into smaller pieces in the gastrointestinal (GI) tract, which is called disintegration. The smaller pieces then dissolve, and the active ingredient is released from the dosage form (typically a compressed tablet or a capsule). This is called dissolution. The rate of dissolution is described by the Noyes-Whitney equation.

The rate of disintegration and dissolution depend on the inactive ingredients used to make the dosage form. Some drugs are made using polymers that help slow down the release of the drug in a controlled way. This can provide less variability in drug concentrations and reduce the dosing frequency.

Sublingual (SL) and orally-disintegrating tablet (ODT) formulations have fast absorption. In general, the rate of absorption by dosage form will follow this order (fastest to slowest): IV, SL, ODT, immediate-release tablet, extended-release tablet.

Most immediate-release formulations dissolve and get absorbed rapidly, but some can be destroyed in the gut (primarily by hydrolysis, or lysis with water) making them less available for absorption. Drug formulations have been developed with protective coatings to limit drug degradation in the stomach (acidic) and permit dissolution in the intestine (basic). Drugs with this type of enteric-coated formulation include bisacodyl and budesonide.

If a drug has poor absorption, one of the methods used to increase the dissolution rate is to reduce particle diameter, which increases surface area. Drugs with very small particle diameters are referred to as micronized, which usually means the diameter was measured in micrometers but sometimes refers to even smaller particle sizes measured in nanometers. Progesterone and fenofibrate are examples of drugs with poor oral absorption that have been developed in micronized formulations.

Following disintegration, the released drug can dissolve in GI fluids. The rate and extent to which the drug dissolves depends on the drug's solubility. Poorly soluble drugs are generally lipophilic, or lipid-loving. Freely soluble drugs are generally hydrophilic, or water-loving. As a drug moves through the GI tract, only dissolved drug is absorbed into the bloodstream. Poorly soluble drugs typically have poor systemic absorption, and highly soluble drugs often have good systemic absorption.

BIOAVAILABILITY

The extent of drug absorption into the systemic circulation is called bioavailability. Bioavailability is reported as a percentage (from 0 to 100%) and reflects the percentage of drug absorbed from extravascular (e.g., oral) compared to intravascular administration (e.g., IV). Bioavailability is affected by solubility, dissolution, route of administration and other factors.

A drug with good absorption has high bioavailability (> 70%), while a drug with poor absorption has low bioavailability (< 10%). For example, levofloxacin and linezolid have high bioavailability; nearly 100% of the oral dose is absorbed, and the oral and IV doses are the same. In many hospitals, these drugs are automatically converted from IV to the same oral dose using a therapeutic interchange or IV to PO protocol. Bisphosphonates (e.g., ibandronate) have low oral bioavailability, so the oral dose (150 mg PO monthly) is much higher than the IV dose (3 mg IV every 3 months) to produce a similar therapeutic effect.

Bioavailability can be calculated using the area under the plasma concentration time curve, or AUC. The AUC represents the total systemic exposure to the drug following administration.

Absolute bioavailability, represented by F, is calculated using the following equation:

$$F\,(\%) = 100 \times \frac{AUC_{extravascular}}{AUC_{intravenous}} \times \frac{Dose_{intravenous}}{Dose_{extravascular}}$$

1. **A pharmacokinetic study of an investigational drug was conducted in healthy volunteers. Following an IV bolus dose of 15 mg, the AUC was determined to be 4.2 mg × hr/L. Subjects were later given an oral dose of 50 mg and the AUC was determined to be 8 mg × hr/L. Calculate the absolute bioavailability of the investigational drug. Round to the nearest whole number.**

$$F(\%) = 100 \times \frac{\frac{8\ mg \times hr}{L}}{\frac{4.2\ mg \times hr}{L}} \times \frac{15\ mg}{50\ mg} = 57\%$$

Different dosage forms of the same drug (e.g., tablet vs. solution) may have different bioavailabilities. The formula below can be used to calculate an equivalent dose of a drug when the dosage form is changed:

$$\text{Dose of New Dosage Form} = \frac{\text{Amount Absorbed from Current Dosage Form}}{\text{F of New Dosage Form}}$$

DISTRIBUTION

Distribution is the process by which drug molecules move from the systemic circulation to tissues and organs. Distribution can occur with intravascular and extravascular routes of administration and depends on the physical and chemical properties of the drug molecule and interactions with membranes and tissues throughout the body. Factors that impact distribution include drug lipophilicity, molecular weight, solubility, ionization status and the extent of protein binding. Factors that favor passage across membranes and greater drug distribution to the tissues include high lipophilicity, low molecular weight, un-ionized status and low protein binding.

Human plasma contains many proteins, and albumin is the primary protein responsible for drug binding. Only the unbound (free) form of a drug can interact with receptors, exert therapeutic or toxic effects and be cleared from the body. If a drug is highly protein-bound (> 90%) and serum albumin is low (< 3.5 g/dL), then a higher percentage of the drug will be in the unbound form and the patient may experience therapeutic or even adverse effects at what appears to be a normal or subtherapeutic level.

Many drug assays cannot differentiate between bound and unbound (active) drug. When assessing levels of highly protein bound compounds (e.g., phenytoin, calcium) in a patient with low serum albumin, an adjustment (correction) of the total level is required. The correction formulas allow us to determine what the concentration would be if albumin was normal. With hypoalbuminemia, the corrected level of a highly protein bound drug will be higher than the total level reported by the lab. This is discussed further in the Calculations III and Seizures/Epilepsy chapters.

The issue described above can be overcome by obtaining a "free" phenytoin level or ionized calcium level. Free phenytoin and ionized calcium only measure the unbound portion, so no adjustment is required for hypoalbuminemia.

CALCIUM AND PHENYTOIN CORRECTION

$$Ca_{corrected}\ (mg/dL) = calcium_{reported\ (serum)} + [(4.0 - albumin) \times (0.8)]\ \dagger$$

$$\text{Phenytoin corrected (mcg/mL)} = \frac{\text{Total phenytoin measured}}{(0.2 \times \text{albumin}) + 0.1}\ \ddagger$$

† Use serum calcium in mg/dL and albumin in g/dL (standard units in the U.S.) in the corrected calcium formula.
‡ Use serum phenytoin in mcg/mL and albumin in g/dL (standard units in the U.S.) in the corrected phenytoin formula.

2. **A pharmacist receives a call from a provider asking for assistance with two patients in the clinic. Both patients have a seizure disorder and are taking phenytoin. Patient A is seizure free, but is experiencing symptoms of toxicity. Patient B has a higher phenytoin level and is doing fine. Both patients have normal renal function. Which of the following statements is/are true of this scenario? (Select ALL that apply.)**

LAB	REFERENCE RANGE	PATIENT A	PATIENT B
Phenytoin level (total)	10-20 mcg/mL	14.3	17.8
Albumin	3.5-5 g/dL	2.1	4.2

A. Patient B's corrected phenytoin level will be lower than the total level reported.
B. Patient A's corrected phenytoin level will be lower than the total level reported.
C. Patient A's corrected phenytoin level will be higher than the total level reported.
D. Patient A has a greater percentage of bound phenytoin.
E. Patient A has a greater percentage of unbound phenytoin.

The correct answers are (C) and (E). The corrected phenytoin level for Patient A (using the formula provided) is 27.5 mcg/mL. Increased unbound phenytoin is contributing to the patient's side effects.

VOLUME OF DISTRIBUTION

The volume of distribution (V or Vd) reflects how large of an area in the patient's body the drug has distributed into. The volume of distribution relates the amount of drug in the body to the concentration of the drug measured in plasma (or serum). The equation for volume of distribution is:

$$Vd = \frac{\text{Amount of drug in body}}{\text{Concentration of drug in plasma}}$$

SUBSCRIPTS IN FORMULAS

Vd can be written as V_d and ke can be written as k_e. Subscripts are not used in this chapter for simplicity.

The Vd is determined from the amount of drug in the body immediately after an IV dose is given.

Vd is a theoretical value, which is why it is sometimes called the "apparent" volume of distribution. Vd is not an exact physical volume that is measured, but is a helpful parameter used to make inferences regarding how widely a drug distributes throughout the body.

3. **A 500 mg dose of gentamicin is administered to a patient, and a blood sample is drawn. The concentration of gentamicin is measured as 25 mcg/mL (which is the same as 25 mg/L). What is the volume of distribution of gentamicin in this patient?**

$$Vd = \frac{500\ \text{mg}}{25\ \text{mg/L}} = 20\ \text{L}$$

METABOLISM

Metabolism is the process by which a drug is converted from its original chemical structure into other forms to facilitate elimination from the body. The original chemical form is called the parent drug and the additional forms are called metabolites. Metabolism can occur throughout the body. The gut and liver are primary sites for drug metabolism due to high levels of metabolic enzymes in these tissues.

Blood from the gut travels to the liver before it reaches the rest of the body. First-pass metabolism is the metabolism of a drug before it reaches the systemic circulation, which can dramatically reduce the bioavailability of an oral formulation. First-pass metabolism of lidocaine is so extensive that the drug cannot be given orally – it must be given IV. Some drugs with extensive first-pass metabolism can be given orally, but in much higher doses than IV doses (e.g., propranolol). Many non-oral, extravascular routes of administration (e.g., transdermal, buccal, sublingual) bypass first-pass metabolism entirely. Rectal administration partially avoids first-pass metabolism.

Drug metabolism involves Phase I reactions (oxidation, reduction and hydrolysis), followed by Phase II reactions (e.g., conjugation). Phase I reactions provide a reactive functional group on the compound that permits the drug to be attacked by Phase II enzymes. For example, breaking carbon bonds or adding a hydroxyl group to a drug makes the drug more hydrophilic – this means more of the drug stays in the blood; the blood then passes through the kidneys, and the drug is renally excreted. Glucuronidation and other Phase II reactions create compounds that are more readily excreted in the urine and bile. Cytochrome P450 (CYP450) enzymes, located mainly in the liver and intestines, metabolize the majority of drugs. Refer to the Basic Science Concepts chapter for further discussion of hydrolysis and oxidation as they relate to drug degradation.

EXCRETION

Excretion is the process of irreversible removal of drugs from the body. Excretion can occur through the kidneys (urine), liver (bile), gut (feces), lungs (exhaled air) and skin (sweat). The primary route of excretion for most drugs is the kidneys (renal excretion). Renal excretion can be increased by adjusting the acidity of the urine. For a weak base, increase excretion by acidifying the urine. For a weak acid, increase excretion by alkalinizing the urine.

P-glycoprotein (P-gp) efflux pumps in the gut play a role in the absorption and excretion of many drugs (see the Drug Interactions chapter).

CLEARANCE AND AREA UNDER THE CURVE

Clearance (Cl) describes the rate of drug removal in a certain volume of plasma over a certain amount of time. Since the liver and kidneys clear most of the drug (and these organs do not usually speed up or slow down), most drug elimination occurs at a steady rate (called the rate of elimination). This is true of drugs that follow first-order kinetics (discussed later in the chapter). Clearance is the efficiency of drug removal from the body and is described by the following equation:

$$Cl = \frac{\text{Rate of Elimination (Re)}}{\text{Drug Concentration}}$$

4. A dose of gentamicin is given to a patient, and urine is collected from the patient for 4 hours after drug administration. It is determined that 300 mg of gentamicin was eliminated during that time period, and the measured plasma concentration at the midpoint of the collection was 12.5 mg/L. Calculate the patient's gentamicin clearance.

$$Cl = \frac{\text{300 mg of gentamicin / 4 hours}}{\text{12.5 mg/L}} = \text{6 L/hr}$$

or

$$Cl = \frac{\text{300 mg of gentamicin}}{\text{4 hours}} \times \frac{\text{L}}{\text{12.5 mg}} = \text{6 L/hr}$$

The rate of elimination (Re) has units of mass per time (e.g., mg/hr), and drug concentration has units of amount per volume (e.g., mg/L); units of mass (mg) cancel out and clearance has units of volume per time (e.g., L/hr).

Because the rate of elimination is difficult to assess clinically, another method is used to calculate the clearance of a drug from the body:

$$F \times Dose = Cl \times AUC$$

The AUC is the most reliable measurement of a drug's bioavailability because it directly represents the amount of the drug that has reached the systemic circulation. The clearance for extravascular administration is calculated with this formula:

$$Cl = \frac{F \times Dose}{AUC}$$

Following IV administration, bioavailability (F) = 1, which can be inserted into the previous equation to determine clearance for a drug given intravenously:

$$Cl = \frac{Dose}{AUC}$$

---

5. A patient is currently receiving 400 mg of gentamicin IV once daily and, based on measured serum concentrations, the AUC is determined to be 80 mg × hr/L. Calculate the patient's gentamicin clearance.

$$Cl = \frac{400\ mg}{\frac{80\ mg \times hr}{L}} = 5\ L/hr$$

ZERO VS. FIRST-ORDER PHARMACOKINETICS

Most drugs follow first-order elimination or "first-order kinetics," where a constant percentage of drug is removed per unit of time. For example, a 325 mg dose of acetaminophen is eliminated at the same rate as a 650 mg dose. With zero-order elimination, a constant amount of drug (mg) is removed per unit of time, no matter how much drug is in the body. The following table provides an example of zero-order and first-order elimination of a 2 gram dose of a drug.

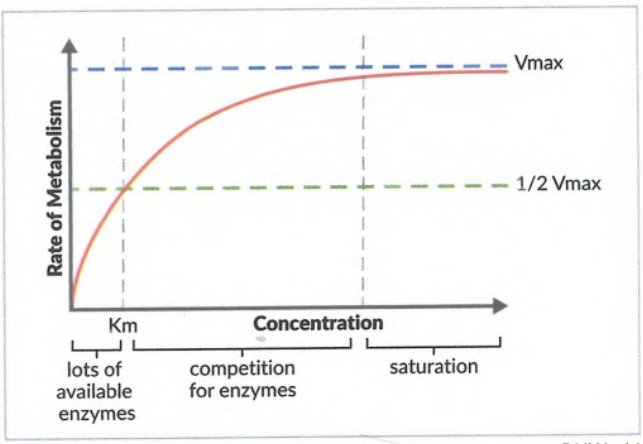
	ZERO-ORDER			FIRST-ORDER		
Hour	Amount of Drug (mg)	Percent Removed in Previous Hour	Amount (mg) Removed in Previous Hour	Amount of Drug (mg)	Percent Removed in Previous Hour	Amount (mg) Removed in Previous Hour
0	2,000			2,000		
1	1,700	15	300	1,600	20	400
2	1,400	17.65	300	1,280	20	320
3	1,100	21.43	300	1,024	20	256

MICHAELIS-MENTEN KINETICS

Phenytoin, theophylline and voriconazole exhibit Michaelis-Menten kinetics (also called saturable, mixed order or non-linear kinetics). The maximum rate of metabolism is defined as the Vmax (see figure on the right). The concentration at which the rate of metabolism is half maximal is defined as the Michaelis-Menten constant (Km). At very low concentrations (much less than the Km), the rate of metabolism mimics a first-order process.

At most concentrations approaching and exceeding the Km, the rate of metabolism becomes mixed. At even higher concentrations relative to the Km, the rate of metabolism approaches zero-order (e.g., Vmax).

Throughout this process, an increase in dose leads to a disproportionate increase in drug concentration at steady state. The rate of phenytoin metabolism approaches the maximum at accepted therapeutic concentrations. Because of this, phenytoin dose adjustments should be made in small increments (30 – 50 mg) when the serum concentration is > 7 mcg/mL. See the Study Tip Gal.



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DOSE ADJUSTMENTS FOR MICHAELIS-MENTEN KINETICS

Most drugs follow first-order (linear) kinetics.

- At steady state, doubling the dose approximately doubles the serum concentration.

Some drugs (phenytoin, theophylline and voriconazole) follow Michaelis-Menten kinetics.

- Doubling the dose of these drugs can more than double the serum concentration.
  - Using a proportion to calculate a new dose is not appropriate.
  - Adjust doses cautiously to avoid toxicity.

6. **A patient has been using phenytoin 100 mg three times daily. A phenytoin level was drawn and found to be 8.8 mcg/mL (reference range 10 – 20 mcg/mL). The dose was doubled to 200 mg three times daily. The patient started to slur her words, felt fatigued and returned to the clinic. The level was repeated and found to be 23.7 mcg/mL. Which of the following statements is accurate regarding the most likely reason for the change in phenytoin level?**

   A. Phenytoin half-life is reduced at higher doses.
   B. Phenytoin volume of distribution increases at higher doses.
   C. The patient's serum albumin level likely increased.
   D. Phenytoin bioavailability can decrease at higher doses.
   E. Phenytoin metabolism can become saturated at higher doses.

   The correct answer is (E). The most likely explanation for the increase in phenytoin level is that when the dose was doubled, the metabolism became partially or completely saturated, and the steady-state level increased dramatically.

ELIMINATION RATE CONSTANT

The elimination rate constant (ke) is the fraction of drug that is eliminated (cleared) per unit of time. It is calculated from the Vd and the clearance:

$$ke = \frac{Cl}{Vd}$$

7. A drug has the following pharmacokinetic parameters: Vd = 50 liters and Cl = 5,000 mL/hour. Calculate the elimination rate constant of the drug.

$$ke = \frac{5\ L/hr}{50\ L} = 0.1\ hr^{-1}$$

Be certain that the values are converted to units that properly cancel out in the equation. The ke is 0.1 hr-1 (meaning that 10% of the drug remaining is cleared per hour).

PREDICTING DRUG CONCENTRATIONS

The ke can be used to predict the concentration of a drug at any time (t) after the dose using the calculations below. The second formula is derived from the first.

$$C_2 = C_1 \times e^{-kt}$$

$$ke = \frac{\ln (C_1 / C_2)}{t}$$

Where C1 = the first or higher drug concentration (sometimes the peak concentration), C2 = the second (or lower) drug concentration (at time = t) and e = the base of the natural log.

8. A patient received a dose of gentamicin. A short time after the end of the infusion, it is known that the drug level was 10 mg/L, and the patient's ke = 0.22 hr^{-1}. Calculate the predicted concentration after 8 hours.

$$C_2 = 10\ mg/L \times e^{-0.22 \times 8}$$

$$C_2 = 10\ mg/L \times 0.172 = 1.72\ mg/L$$

9. A patient being treated with vancomycin had a supratherapeutic trough level of 28 mcg/mL. If ke = 0.15 hr^{-1}, predict how long it will take for the trough to decrease to the goal therapeutic trough (15 mcg/mL). Round to the nearest hour.

$$0.15\ hr^{-1} = \frac{\ln (28 / 15)}{t} = 4.16\ hr, \text{ or } 4\ hours$$

HALF-LIFE ($T_{1/2}$) AND STEADY STATE

The time required for a drug concentration (and drug amount) to decrease by 50% is called the elimination half-life ($t_{1/2}$). For example, it takes 5 hours for theophylline concentrations to fall from 16 to 8 mg/L. The half-life of theophylline is 5 hours. It takes 5 more hours for the drug concentration to fall from 8 mg/L to 4 mg/L. Half-life is independent of the drug concentration for drugs exhibiting first-order kinetics.

Half-life is more clinically meaningful than ke. The half-life of a drug can be calculated from the ke:

$$t_{½} = \frac{0.693}{ke}$$

The half-life of a drug can be used to calculate the time required for drug washout (complete elimination) or the time required to achieve steady-state (refer to the table below). When a fixed dose is administered at regular intervals, the drug accumulates until it reaches steady state where the rate of drug intake equals the rate of drug elimination.

The time required to reach steady state depends on the elimination half-life of the drug. It takes ~5 half-lives to reach steady state, assuming the drug follows first-order kinetics (described previously) in a one-compartment distribution model (the drug is rapidly and evenly distributed throughout the body) and no loading dose has been given. Similarly, 5 half-lives are required to eliminate more than 95% of the drug if no additional doses are given. The most clinically useful information is obtained from drug levels collected at steady state.

# OF HALF-LIVES	ELIMINATION (NO ADDITIONAL DOSES GIVEN) % OF DRUG REMAINING IN THE BODY	ACCUMULATION (MULTIPLE DOSES GIVEN) % OF STEADY-STATE ACHIEVED
1	50	50
2	25	75
3	12.5	87.5
4	6.25	93.8
5	3.13	96.9

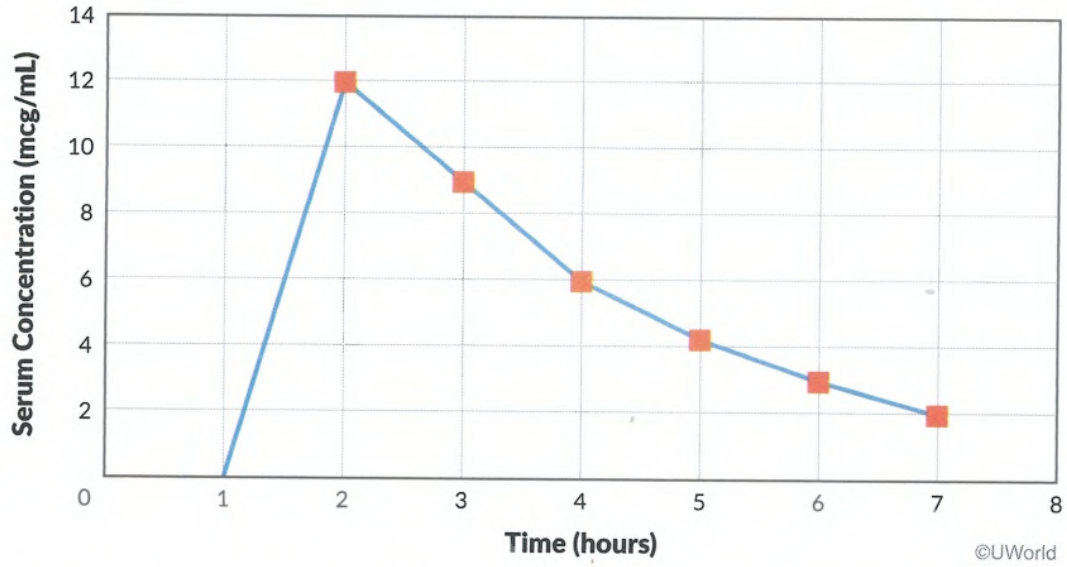
10. Tetracycline has a clearance of 7.014 L/hr and a Vd of 105 L. Calculate the half-life of tetracycline (round to the nearest tenth) and the time required for elimination of greater than 95% of the drug from the body.

$$ke = \frac{Cl}{Vd} = \frac{7.014\ L/hr}{105\ L} = 0.0668\ hr^{-1}$$

$$t_{1/2} = \frac{0.693}{ke} = \frac{0.693}{0.0668\ hr^{-1}} = 10.4\ hours$$

The time required is 10.4 hours x 5 half-lives = 52 hours

11. The serum concentration of Drug A over time is plotted in the figure below. What is the half-life of Drug A?



The drug concentrations can be presented in a figure (as shown) or in a list. Identify two times (in hours) where the drug concentration has decreased by half to find the half-life:

- At 2 hours the concentration is 12 mcg/mL and at 4 hours the concentration is 6 mcg/mL.
- It takes 2 hours for the concentration to decrease by 50%, so the half-life is 2 hours.

The equations under "Predicting Drug Concentrations" can also be used to calculate half-life and drug levels on a concentration curve like this. Plotting out the levels and time can be useful for solving many types of pharmacokinetic problems.

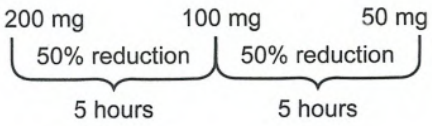
12. A patient was receiving Drug B for 1 week. The drug was held on June 1st due to an elevated serum concentration. Based on the serum concentrations obtained after the drug was held (shown below), what is the half-life of Drug B?

TIME	CONCENTRATION OF DRUG B
1400	12 mcg/mL
1500	8.5 mcg/mL
1600	6 mcg/mL
1700	4.3 mcg/mL
1900	2.1 mcg/mL

The drug concentration fell by 50% (from 12 mcg/mL to 6 mcg/mL) in 2 hours, so the half-life of Drug B is 2 hours. This is a different way of presenting the same information from the previous problem.

13. A patient receives 200 mg of a drug with a half-life of 5 hours. How much of the drug remains after 10 hours?

- 10 hours = 2 half-lives
- 50 mg of the drug remains after 10 hours



LOADING DOSE

Administration of a loading dose can be necessary to rapidly achieve therapeutic concentrations of a drug. When the half-life of a drug is long relative to the frequency of administration, several doses must be administered before steady state is achieved.

14. A patient will be started on daily oral digoxin for management of atrial fibrillation. The following pharmacokinetic parameters for oral digoxin are known: F = 0.6, Vd = 500 L and Cl = 120 L/day. When would steady state be reached? Round to the nearest day.

$$ke = \frac{Cl}{Vd} = \frac{120\ L/day}{500\ L} = 0.24\ days^{-1}$$

$$t_{1/2} = \frac{0.693}{ke} = \frac{0.693}{0.24\ days^{-1}} = \sim 2.89\ days$$

$$\text{Steady State} = 5\ \text{half-lives} \times 2.89\ days = \sim 14\ days$$

It is beneficial to administer a loading dose to achieve the targeted levels more quickly in this case. The loading dose can be determined with the following equation:

$$\text{Loading Dose} = \frac{\text{Desired Concentration} \times Vd}{F}$$

15. Using the pharmacokinetic parameters provided in the previous question, what oral loading dose of digoxin is appropriate to rapidly achieve a peak concentration of 1.5 mcg/L?

$$\text{Loading Dose} = \frac{\text{Desired Concentration} \times Vd}{F} = \frac{1.5\ mcg/L \times 500\ L}{0.6} = 1{,}250\ mcg \text{ or } 1.25\ mg$$

THERAPEUTIC DRUG MONITORING

Some medications are monitored with drug levels to reach dosing goals and avoid toxicity (see the Lab Values & Drug Monitoring chapter). If drug levels are too high, toxicity can occur. If drug levels are too low, the patient's condition might not be treated adequately. To prevent either toxicity or inadequate treatment, an adjustment of the dosing regimen is needed.

The peak level is the highest concentration in the blood the drug will reach. With intravenous drugs, peaks are typically drawn 30 minutes after the end of the infusion to allow for drug distribution to occur (e.g., aminoglycosides). The trough level is the lowest concentration reached by the drug before the next dose is given; it is drawn immediately before (or within 30 minutes before) the dose is due. When adjusting a dosing regimen, changing the dose generally affects the peak, and changing the interval/frequency generally affects the trough.

Therapeutic drug monitoring optimizes drug therapy by enhancing efficacy (e.g., overcoming resistance) and reducing toxicity associated with overdosing or drug accumulation. Antibiotic dosing strategies are dictated by certain pharmacodynamic parameters [e.g., peak to minimum inhibitory concentration (MIC) ratio, AUC to MIC ratio or time above the MIC]. This is discussed in the Infectious Diseases I chapter.

16. A patient is receiving tobramycin 120 mg IV every 8 hours at 0600, 1400 and 2200. The drug is being infused over 30 minutes. A tobramycin level drawn at 1500 was 9.8 mcg/mL. A trough level scheduled for 2200 was inadvertently drawn at 1830 and was 5.6 mcg/mL. What would the expected level (extrapolated trough) be at 2200? Round to the nearest tenth.

$$ke = \frac{\ln(9.8 / 5.6)}{3.5} = 0.1599\ hr^{-1}$$

$$C_2 = 5.6\ mcg/mL \times e^{-0.1599 \times 3.5}$$

$$C_2 = 5.6\ mcg/mL \times 0.5714 = 3.2\ mcg/mL$$

CALCULATING TIME (T)

Determining the correct value to use for time (t) can be challenging. Try creating your own concentration-time curve and plotting the values you are given.

Either measured level (9.8 mcg/mL or 5.6 mcg/mL) can be used in the second step of the problem. If 9.8 mcg/mL was used, time (t) would be 7 hours. In this case, the regimen should be adjusted due to an elevated trough (goal < 2 mcg/mL) by increasing the dosing interval.

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CHAPTER 78

PHARMACOGENOMICS

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= Study Tip Gal = Key Drugs Guy

BACKGROUND

Pharmacogenomics is the science of examining inherited variations in genes that determine a patient's response to a drug. It is estimated that genetic factors are responsible for 20 – 40% of the differences in drug metabolism and response between patients. The goal of pharmacogenomics is to identify these factors and design treatments with improved efficacy and reduced adverse reactions.

Pharmacogenomics is called "personalized medicine" because drugs can be avoided entirely or used preferentially, based on a person's genotype. The genotype is an individual's unique genetic instructions (the DNA code), which can determine response and tolerability of drugs.

PHARMACOGENOMICS IS BECOMING MAINSTREAM

Medication prescribing has historically been hit-or-miss (i.e., it has not always been possible to predict a patient's response to medications).

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Today, pharmacogenomic testing is more accessible, and assessing the presence or lack of genes that influence efficacy (response) and the likelihood of adverse events can guide prescribing.

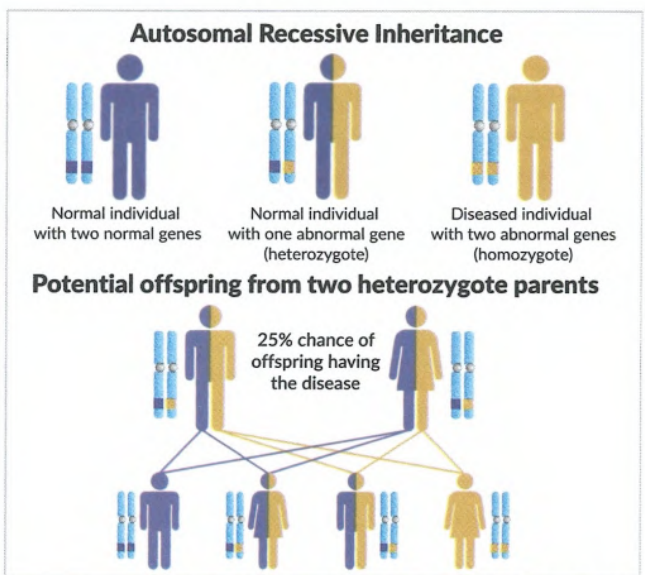
Many tests are conducted on DNA extracted from a sample of saliva. Health insurance plans cover the cost of some pharmacogenetic tests if prescribed by a healthcare provider.

DOMINANT AND RECESSIVE TRAITS

Dominant and recessive genotypes describe the inheritance patterns of certain traits. They can be used to determine how likely it is for a certain phenotype (an observable trait) to pass from parent to offspring.

Each parent contributes one copy (an allele) of each gene to the offspring. The differences in each allele cause variations in protein production (expression), which determines the phenotype (e.g., brown or blonde hair). The phenotype will also be influenced by the offspring's environment.

A dominant allele produces a dominant phenotype in individuals who have one copy of the allele from one parent. For a recessive allele to produce a recessive phenotype, the individual must have two copies, one from each parent (see figure).



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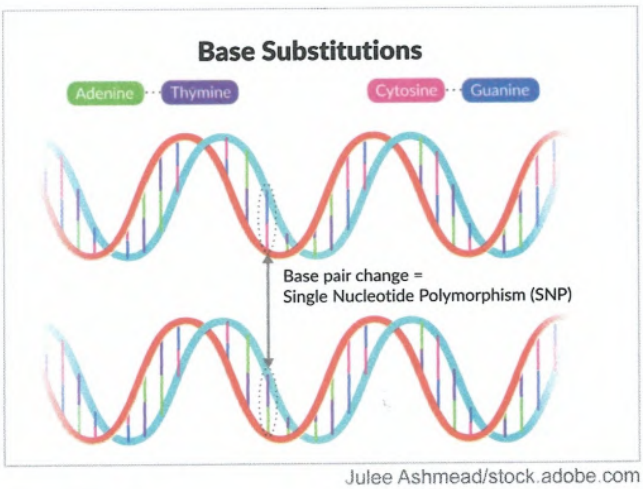
DEFINITIONS

TERM	DEFINITION
Deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA)	The genetic information inherited from both parents that is present in two long chains of nucleotides, joined together by hydrogen bonds and twisted into a double helix. DNA is the main component of chromosomes.
Nucleotide	A subunit of the nucleic acids DNA and RNA (ribonucleic acid). Each nucleotide contains a nitrogen base, a five-carbon sugar (deoxyribose in DNA, and ribose in RNA) and a phosphate group. In DNA, the bases consist of two purines (adenine and guanine) and two pyrimidines (thymine and cytosine). In RNA, uracil is present instead of thymine.
Chromosome	A tightly packed structure within the cell nucleus, consisting of DNA and proteins. Chromosomes contain genes. Human cells contain 23 pairs of chromosomes.
Gene	A specific sequence of nucleotides that code (i.e., provide instructions) for a single protein. A gene is similar to a recipe, or a set of instructions, on how to make a protein. Since proteins make up the entire life form, genes are referred to as the "blueprint" of life.
Allele	The specific form of a gene. Alleles are either wild-type or variants. Wild-type is usually the most commonly occurring allele.
Genotype	The set of unique genes that determine a specific trait in an individual. Two identical alleles make up a homozygous genotype (e.g., CYP450 2C19*1/*1) and two different alleles make up a heterozygous genotype (e.g., CYP2C19*1/*3).
Phenotype	An observable trait (outward expression) of the genotype, even if it is not outwardly visible. Examples include physical traits (e.g., eye color), genetic diseases (e.g., sickle cell disease, cystic fibrosis) and changes in metabolism (e.g., poor metabolizer of a drug).
Haplotype	A group of genes or DNA variations inherited from a single parent that exist on the same chromosome and are likely to be inherited together.
Polymorphism	An inherited variation in the DNA sequence (e.g., single nucleotide polymorphism).

SINGLE NUCLEOTIDE POLYMORPHISM

A single nucleotide polymorphism (SNP; pronounced "snip") occurs when there is a change in a single base pair in a genetic sequence (e.g., C replaced by G). SNPs are the most common genetic alteration in DNA. A SNP can be harmless, or it can lead to a disease or altered response to a drug. For example, in cystic fibrosis, a SNP results in defective coding for a protein involved in sweat and mucus production. SNPs are responsible for the majority of individual variability in response to a drug.



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CYTOCHROME P450 ENZYMES

CYP ENZYMES ARE POLYMORPHIC

The CYP450 enzymes are polymorphic, which means there are different forms of the same enzyme (due to a SNP in the DNA that codes for the enzyme). A SNP can cause the enzyme activity or production in an individual to increase or decrease, which will increase or decrease the rate of drug metabolism and, consequently, the serum level of the substrate drug. The major types of CYP enzyme variations impacting activity (i.e., rate of metabolism) are classified into 5 groups (see table below): ultrarapid metabolizer (UM), rapid metabolizer (RM), normal metabolizer (NM), intermediate metabolizer (IM) and poor metabolizer (PM).

- PMs have significantly reduced or no enzyme activity of a particular enzyme.
  - For example, a CYP2D6 PM has reduced or no metabolism of a drug metabolized by CYP2D6.
  - In this case, drug levels increase (or in the case of a prodrug, less will be metabolized to the active form).
  - This might mean a patient should avoid drugs metabolized by that enzyme or use a modified dose to prevent adverse effects.
- IMs have lower enzyme activity that falls between NMs and PMs.
- NMs have fully functional enzyme activity, which typically results in an expected drug response.
- UMs and RMs have a higher enzyme activity compared to NMs.
  - This leads to faster metabolism of a drug through that enzyme, causing drug levels to decrease.
  - Patients can metabolize a prodrug to its active form and/or eliminate an active drug faster than expected.

PHENOTYPE	ENZYME ACTIVITY	EXAMPLE CYP2C19
Poor metabolizer	Very low or none	CYP2C19*2/*2
Intermediate metabolizer	Low	CYP2C19*1/*2
Normal metabolizer	Normal	CYP2C19*1/*1
Rapid Metabolizer	High	CYP2C19*1/*17
Ultrarapid metabolizer	Very high	CYP2C19*17/*17

CYP ENZYMES VARY BY ETHNICITY AND AMONG INDIVIDUALS

Gene variants are most often inherited, and the variant enzyme expression can be measured among ethnic groups. Using CYP2D6 as an example, PMs are more commonly found in Europeans, while a significantly higher frequency of UMs are found in Pacific Islanders.

PHARMACOGENOMIC TESTING AND PHARMACIST ACTION

DRUG	TEST	SIGNIFICANCE/POPULATION	RESULT/ ACTION
Human leukocyte antigen (HLA) testing: the major histocompatibility complex, class I, B (HLA-B) is an important gene in the immune system.			
Abacavir and abacavir-containing drugs (e.g., ***Triumeq, Epzicom)***	HLA-B*5701	Patients who are HLA-B*5701 positive are at ↑ risk for a hypersensitivity reaction. Test all patients prior to starting. Serious and fatal hypersensitivity reactions have occurred.	If positive, do not use.
Allopurinol	HLA-B*5801	Patients testing positive for HLA-B*5801 have an increased risk of Stevens-Johnson syndrome (SJS). Discontinue at the first sign of an allergic reaction, including skin rash. Consider testing high-risk individuals (African, Asian, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander ancestry).	If positive, do not use.
Carbamazepine **Oxcarbazepine** **Phenytoin** **Fosphenytoin**	HLA-B*1502	The HLA-B*1502 allele (more common in Asian populations) ↑ the risk of serious skin reactions including SJS and toxic epidermal necrolysis (TEN). Test all Asian patients before starting carbamazepine; testing is suggested for oxcarbazepine and optional for fos/phenytoin.	If positive, do not use (unless benefit clearly outweighs risk).
Select drugs impacted by CYP450 polymorphisms: polymorphisms of various CYP450 enzymes may be responsible for much of the variability in medication response. These polymorphisms could affect any population, but are not yet routinely tested.			
Citalopram	CYP2C19	Citalopram is metabolized by CYP2C19 to inactive metabolites. The CYP2C19*1 allele is fully functional, whereas the *2 and *3 alleles indicate ↓ metabolism. Patients with CYP2C19*2 or *3 alleles are poor metabolizers and are at risk of QT prolongation.	If known to have a CYP2C19*2 or *3 allele, citalopram should be limited to 20 mg/day.
Clopidogrel	CYP2C19	Clopidogrel is a prodrug. It must be converted to an active metabolite by CYP2C19. The CYP2C19*2 and *3 alleles indicate ↓ metabolism (less active metabolite formed). Patients with CYP2C19*2 or *3 alleles are poor metabolizers and have ↑ CV events.	If known to have a CYP2C19*2 or *3 allele, consider alternative treatment.
Codeine	CYP2D6	Codeine (a prodrug) is metabolized to morphine via CYP2D6. Ultrarapid metabolizers are at ↑ risk of opioid overdose due to extensive conversion to morphine. Over-production of morphine can ↑ CNS effects, including respiratory depression. Infant deaths have occurred when nursing mothers who were ultrarapid metabolizers took codeine for pain. Excessive morphine was passed to the infant through breast milk.	If a known CYP2D6 ultrarapid metabolizer, do not use (toxicity risk). If a known CYP2D6 poor metabolizer, do not use (lack of efficacy).
Warfarin	CYP2C9*2 and *3, VKORC1	S-warfarin is metabolized by CYP2C9 to inactive metabolites. The CYP2C9*1 allele is fully functional, whereas the *2 and *3 alleles indicate ↓ metabolism. Increased bleeding risk due to CYP2C9*2 and *3. A SNP in the gene for the enzyme that warfarin inhibits (VKORC1 G > A variant) can ↑ bleeding risk	If these allele variants are known to be present, start with a lower dose.

DRUG	TEST	SIGNIFICANCE/POPULATION	RESULT/ ACTION
Other pharmacogenomic tests			
Trastuzumab and other HER2 inhibitors (see Oncology chapter)	HER2 gene expression	These drugs require expression of HER2 for efficacy. Patients with HER2 negative status do not respond well to treatment.	If tumor is HER2 negative, drugs are not effective.
Cetuximab and other EGFR inhibitors (see Oncology chapter)	KRAS mutation	Only patients who are KRAS mutation-negative (i.e., are wild-type) should receive these medications. They are not effective in patients with colorectal cancer who are positive for the KRAS mutation.	If positive for a KRAS mutation, do not use.
Azathioprine	Thiopurine methyltransferase (TPMT)	Low/absent TPMT activity ↑ the risk of severe, life threatening myelosuppression (↓ WBCs, ↓ RBCs, ↓ platelets); patients with intermediate TPMT activity are also at ↑ risk for myelosuppression, but with lower severity.	If TPMT activity is low/absent, start at a very low dose or use an alternative treatment.
Capecitabine **Fluorouracil**	DPD deficiency	Dihydropyrimidine dehydrogenase (DPD) deficiency ↑ risk of severe toxicity (diarrhea, neutropenia, neurotoxicity).	If DPD deficient, do not use.

Refer to the Key Drugs Guy below for drugs with required or strongly recommended pharmacogenomic testing per the package labeling.

DOES A POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE TEST REQUIRE ACTION?

Avoid the drug when these pharmacogenomic tests are POSITIVE

- HLA-B: a positive test indicates ↑ risk of hypersensitivity
- KRAS mutation: a positive test (often called "KRAS mutant") predicts a poor response

Avoid the drug when this pharmacogenomic test is NEGATIVE

- HER2 expression: a negative result indicates a poor response

SELECT DRUGS WITH PHARMACOGENOMIC IMPLICATIONS

KEY DRUGS

Testing required or strongly recommended:
Abacavir and any combination products containing abacavir

Azathioprine

Carbamazepine

Cetuximab and other EGFR inhibitors

Trastuzumab and other HER2 inhibitors

May consider testing, though not routine:
Allopurinol

Capecitabine and fluorouracil

Clopidogrel

Codeine

Phenytoin and fosphenytoin

Warfarin

Select Guidelines/References

Clinical Pharmacogenetics Implementation Consortium (CPIC) Guidelines. https://cpicpgx.org/guidelines.

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CHAPTER 79

DIETARY SUPPLEMENTS, NATURAL & COMPLEMENTARY MEDICINE

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= Study Tip Gal

BACKGROUND

Complementary medicine refers to health practices (e.g., dietary supplements, acupuncture) that are used with conventional medicine (e.g., healthcare provider visits, prescription medications).

Alternative medicine refers to health practices used instead of conventional medicine.

NATURAL MEDICINE

'Natural medicine' is an umbrella term that includes herbals (plant products), vitamins, minerals and other substances that are not plant-derived but exist in nature (e.g., glucosamine from shellfish). The FDA uses the term "dietary supplements," which will be used here.

Dietary supplements are regulated by the Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act (DSHEA) of 1994. DSHEA requires the manufacturer to ensure that their products are safe before they are marketed. In contrast, drugs must be proven safe and effective before they can be sold. The United States Pharmacopeia (USP) establishes standards for dietary supplements. Pharmacists can help consumers choose a reputable product with the USP Verified Mark on the product label.

Once a supplement is marketed, the company selling or distributing the supplement must forward adverse event reports to the FDA. Adverse events from supplements can be reported to the FDA's Safety Reporting Portal, which sorts safety issues to the correct FDA site. To remove a supplement from the marketplace or restrict its use, the FDA must show it is "unsafe."

Supplements can pose inherent safety risks in certain patients. Four areas of particular concern are situations where supplements interact with prescription drugs, increase bleeding risk or cause hepatotoxicity or cardiotoxicity. Risks with natural products are usually dose-dependent; higher doses have a higher risk.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) has a Dietary Supplements Label Database that provides health information about dietary supplements for consumers and health professionals. Information on natural medicines can also be found in general drug references and the *Natural Medicines Database*.

DIETARY SUPPLEMENT LABELING

The claims on supplement labels are limited (see Study Tip Gal) because the supplements have not had rigorous trials to determine safety and efficacy. The Supplement Facts label includes the recommended daily intake (RDI) and the amount of each ingredient in the product.

Manufacturers cannot make claims that the product treats or cures a condition. Health claims are limited to the nutrient content, the relationship to health and the impact on normal body structure or function, such as "calcium builds strong bones," and "fiber maintains bowel regularity." Products that make claims on the structure or function of the body (e.g., antioxidants maintain cell integrity) must state in a "disclaimer" that the FDA has not evaluated the claim.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN DIETARY SUPPLEMENTS AND DRUGS

Supplement safety is the manufacturer's responsibility, which should be proven prior to release. After release, the FDA can remove a supplement if it is found to be unsafe.

- In contrast, drugs must be proven safe and effective via clinical trials to the FDA prior to release.

Supplements cannot claim to treat, cure or mitigate (lessen) a condition (e.g., "melatonin treats insomnia" is not appropriate).

- In contrast, drug claims are based on FDA approval (e.g., "zolpidem treats insomnia" is appropriate).

SUPPLEMENTS

- The Supplement Facts label is similar to the label required on food products. It includes the ingredients, quantities, serving size, servings per container, calories, calories from fat, total fat and saturated fat, cholesterol, sodium, carbohydrate, dietary fiber, sugars, protein, vitamin A, vitamin C, calcium and iron, when present in measurable amounts.

OTC DRUGS

- The OTC Drug Facts label includes ingredients, purpose, uses, warnings, instructions, excipients and allergic reaction alerts/warnings. OTC drugs can include a package insert similar to prescription drugs; this depends on the product's approval process.

PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

- The package insert contains much more detailed information; see the Drug References chapter.

INTERACTIONS WITH PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

ST. JOHN'S WORT

Important drug interactions with St. John's wort (SJW):

- SJW induces the CYP450 3A4, 2C19, 2C9 and 1A2 enzymes and p-glycoprotein (P-gp), which decreases the level of some drugs.
  - Avoid use with medications that may be associated with treatment failure with decreased concentrations (e.g., oral contraceptives, transplant drugs, warfarin).
- SJW is serotonergic and can increase the risk of serotonin syndrome.
  - Do not use with MAO inhibitors (e.g., linezolid).
  - Concurrent use with other serotonergic drugs (e.g., SSRIs, SNRIs) can be dangerous, especially at higher doses.
- SJW causes photosensitivity and requires counseling on sun protection and avoidance.
  - Photosensitivity risk increases when taken with other photosensitizing drugs (e.g., retinoids, tetracyclines); see Drug Allergies & Adverse Drug Reactions chapter.
- SJW may lower the seizure threshold; use caution with other drugs known to lower the seizure threshold (e.g., bupropion, quinolones, tramadol) and in patients with a history of seizures. See Seizures/Epilepsy chapter.

SUPPLEMENTS THAT INCREASE BLEEDING RISK

Supplements that can increase bleeding risk include:

- The "5 Gs": garlic, ginger, ginkgo, ginseng and glucosamine
- Fish oils (at higher doses)
- Vitamin E
- Dong quai
- Willow bark (a salicylate)

Concurrent use with other drugs known to increase bleeding risk (e.g., anticoagulants) should be avoided.

SUPPLEMENTS WITH RISK OF LIVER TOXICITY

Supplements that can be hepatotoxic include:

- Black cohosh (used for menopausal symptoms)
- Kava (used for stress/anxiety)
- Chaparral, comfrey
- Green tea "extracts"

SUPPLEMENTS WITH RISK OF CARDIAC TOXICITY

Cardiotoxic supplements have the highest risk of toxicity in patients with cardiac conditions.

- Ephedra was removed from the market due to reports of cardiac toxicity. Bitter orange (Citrus aurantium or synephrine) replaced ephedra in many products.
  - These are stimulants that cause dose-dependent increases in blood pressure and heart rate. There have also been reports of myocardial infarction, stroke and arrhythmias.
- DMAA (dimethylamylamine) is an amphetamine derivative used in body-building or performance-enhancement products.
  - Cardiotoxic effects of DMAA include increased blood pressure and heart rate.
- Natural licorice contains glycyrrhizin.
  - Glycyrrhizin, taken in excess, can lower potassium and increase blood pressure.
- Yohimbe is used for erectile dysfunction and to increase libido.
  - Yohimbine, the alkaloid derived from yohimbe, raises blood pressure, increases heart rate and has a risk of seizures.
- Caffeine in high doses can raise blood pressure and increase heart rate. It can be found in:
  - Supplements for weight loss, energy and body-building.
  - Black tea, green tea, cocoa, yerba mate, guarana and kombucha (fermented tea).

COMMONLY USED SUPPLEMENTS

CONDITION	TREATMENT
Anxiety	Valerian
	Passionflower
	Kava
	St. John's wort
	Chamomile
	5-Hydroxytryptophan (5-HTP)
Cold Sores (Aphthous Ulcers/Canker Sores)	L-lysine
Colds and Flu	Echinacea
	Zinc
	Vitamin C (ascorbic acid)
	Eucalyptus oil, used for nasal congestion, allergies
	Probiotics (e.g., *Bifidobacterium animalis, Lactobacillus acidophilus)*
Dementia/ Memory	Ginkgo
	Vitamin E (alpha-tocopherol)
	Vitamin D
	Acetyl-L-carnitine
	Vinpocetine, used for memory, neuroprotection, weight loss
Depression	St. John's wort
	SAMe (S-adenosyl-L-methionine)
	5-HTP
	Valerian
Diabetes	Alpha lipoic acid, used for diabetic neuropathy, memory, neuroprotection
	Chromium
	Cassia cinnamon
	Magnesium
	Ginseng (American, Panax)

CONDITION	TREATMENT
Dyslipidemia	Red yeast rice (contains a natural form of lovastatin)
	Omega-3 fatty acids, "fish oils"
	Garlic (controversial benefit)
	Plant sterol (beta-sitosterol)
	Fiber (barley, psyllium, oat bran)
Dyspepsia	Calcium
	Magnesium
	Peppermint
	Chamomile
Energy/Weight Loss	Bitter orange (contains synephrine)
	Caffeine
	Guarana, green tea powder (contains caffeine)
Erectile Dysfunction	Ginseng
	L-arginine
	Yohimbe
Heart Failure, Heart Health (general)	Coenzyme Q10 (ubiquinone)
	Hawthorn
	Omega-3 fatty acids, "fish oils"
Hypertension	Omega-3 fatty acids, "fish oils"
	Garlic (controversial benefit)
	Fiber (barley, psyllium, oat bran)
	Potassium
Gastrointestinal Health	Fiber (barley, psyllium, oat bran), used for diarrhea, constipation
	Probiotics *(Lactobacillus, Saccharomyces boulardii, Bifidobacterium infantis* strains)
	Ginger, used for nausea
	Chamomile
	Peppermint
	Horehound, used for GI health, constipation
	Wheatgrass, used for GI health, detoxification

CONDITION	TREATMENT
Inflammation	Omega-3 fatty acids, "fish oils"
	Flax seeds/oil (converted to DHA and EPA)
	Turmeric
Insomnia/Sleep	Melatonin, used for sleep (taken QHS) and to prevent/treat jet lag (0.5-2 mg taken pre-flight and higher doses, such as 5 mg, post-flight)
	Valerian
	Kava
	Chamomile
	Passionflower
	5-HTP and L-tryptophan
Liver Disease	Milk thistle
Menopause	Black cohosh
	Evening primrose oil
	Soy, red clover, Panax ginseng [contain mild phyto-(plant) estrogens]
	Dong quai
Migraine, Prophylaxis	Feverfew
	Butterbur
	Magnesium
	Riboflavin (vitamin B2)
	Coenzyme Q10
	Caffeine sources (e.g., guarana)
Motion Sickness	Ginger
	Peppermint

CONDITION	TREATMENT
Osteoarthritis	Glucosamine (best evidence with sulfate salts)
	Chondroitin
	SAMe (S-adenosyl-L-methionine)
	Turmeric, used to ↓ inflammation/pain
Osteoporosis	Calcium
	Vitamin D
	Soy
Prostate Health	Saw palmetto
	Lycopene
	Pygeum
	Pumpkin seed
Skin Conditions	Tea tree oil, used for acne, dandruff, fungal infections
	Aloe vera, used for lichen planus, psoriasis, HSV, burns
	Topical vitamin D, used for psoriasis, seborrheic keratosis
	Topical vitamin A & D ointment, used for diaper rash
	Biotin, used for hair and nail health
UTI	Cranberry
	Yogurt
	Probiotics *(Bifidobacteria, Lactobacillus* strains)

SAFETY CONCERNS WITH COMMON SUPPLEMENTS

TREATMENT	NOTES, SAFETY CONCERNS
5-HTP	Serotonergic, ↑ risk of serotonin syndrome with other serotonergic drugs
Beta-carotene	↑ cardiovascular mortality, ↑ risk of lung cancer (in smokers or asbestos exposure)
Bitter melon	↓ blood glucose; caution with hypoglycemic drugs
Bitter orange (synephrine)	Stimulant; dose-related ↑ BP, ↑ HR and arrhythmia risk
Black cohosh	May be hepatotoxic

TREATMENT	NOTES, SAFETY CONCERNS
Caffeine (including guarana and green tea powder)	Dose-related ↑ BP, ↑ HR, dizziness, agitation and irritability
Chamomile	Allergic cross-reactivity with artichoke, echinacea, chrysanthemums and ragweed
Chondroitin	↑ bleeding risk, ↑ INR with warfarin
Dong quai	↑ bleeding risk
Echinacea	Allergic cross-reactivity with artichoke, chamomile, chrysanthemums and ragweed; potential exacerbation of autoimmune disorders
Feverfew	Mouth ulceration, ↑ bleeding risk
Fiber (barley, psyllium, oat bran)	GI effects (e.g., bloating, cramping, flatulence)
Garlic	Known as the "5 Gs" ↑ bleeding risk; discontinue prior to surgery
Ginger	
Ginkgo	
Ginseng	
Glucosamine	
Hawthorn	↓ BP, positive inotrope [avoid use with other inotropes like digoxin (additive effect)]
Kava	Known hepatotoxin (avoid use)
L-arginine	Converts into nitric oxide which can ↓ BP and ↑ dizziness; avoid use with nitrates
Melatonin	Chronic use can ↓ endogenous melatonin resulting in dependency for sleep
Omega-3 fatty acids, "fish oils"	↑ bleeding risk with high doses, can ↑ LDL
Passionflower	QT prolongation
Potassium	Fatal arrhythmias with supratherapeutic levels; should be dosed based on measured levels (avoid unsupervised OTC supplementation)
Probiotics	Separate use from oral antibiotics, concern that use of live bacteria in immunocompromised states could cause an infection
Red yeast rice	↑ myopathy risk; avoid CYP450 inhibitors (↑ red yeast rice level) and do not use with statins
SAMe (S-adenosylmethionine)	Serotonergic, ↑ risk of serotonin syndrome with other serotonergic drugs; ↑ bleeding risk; do not use in bipolar disorder due to ↑ risk of manic behavior
Soy, red clover, Panax ginseng	Contain mild phyto-(plant) estrogens; may ↑ breast cancer risk in postmenopausal women who are not producing estradiol
St. John's wort	Serotonergic, photosensitivity, enzyme induction results in many drug interactions
Valerian	Sedation, CNS depressant
Vinpocetine	Fetal harm
Vitamin C (ascorbic acid)	Nephrolithiasis with high doses, false-negative stool occult blood test
Vitamin E (alpha-tocopherol)	↑ bleeding risk
Yohimbe	↑ BP, ↑ HR, seizure risk
Zinc	Nasal products can cause loss of smell

MEDICAL FOODS

Medical foods are not medications, nor are they supplements. They are compounds used to meet a nutritional need, which should be used under medical supervision, yet not all require a prescription.

FDA REQUIREMENTS FOR MEDICAL FOODS

Medical foods must be taken:

- Enterally (by mouth or with an enteral feeding tube).
- Under the supervision of a healthcare professional.
- With the intention to treat a condition with a known nutritional requirement.

All ingredients in a medical food must be considered safe when used as intended [i.e., designated as Generally Recognized As Safe (GRAS) by the FDA].

COMMONLY USED MEDICAL FOODS

Commonly used medical foods and their indications include:

- L-methylfolate [active form of folate *(Deplin)*]: depression
- Vitamin B6 and B12 (*Metanx):* neuropathic pain
- Phosphatidylserine conjugated to different forms of enriched omega-3 fatty acids: mild cognitive impairment

VITAMIN SUPPLEMENTATION

Vitamins, which may also be referred to by their common names (see table to the right), are essential for supporting various physiological functions. A well balanced diet often provides an adequate source of vitamins, but supplementation may be required for those with poor diets low in nutritional value to prevent nutrient deficiencies.

Additionally, some drugs may deplete certain vitamins, require a supplement to work properly or require a supplement to reduce toxicity (see table later in chapter). Vitamin supplements may also be needed in select age groups (e.g., folate in females of childbearing age) or conditions (e.g., thiamine in alcohol use disorder).

VITAMINS	NAMES
Vitamin A	Retinol
Vitamin B1	Thiamine
Vitamin B2	Riboflavin
Vitamin B3	Niacin
Vitamin B6	Pyridoxine
Vitamin B9	Folate
Vitamin B12	Cobalamin
Vitamin C	Ascorbic Acid
Vitamin D2	Ergocalciferol
Vitamin D3	Cholecalciferol
Vitamin E	Alpha-tocopherol

CALCIUM & VITAMIN D

Calcium supplements with different characteristics (e.g., acid-dependent versus acid-independent absorption) and amount of elemental calcium are available OTC. Product type and selection are discussed in the Osteoporosis, Menopause & Testosterone Use chapter.

Calcium levels are partially affected by vitamin D (i.e., vitamin D is required for calcium absorption). Patients who do not receive enough vitamin D from the sun or diet can benefit from supplementation with both calcium and vitamin D. Empiric vitamin D supplementation (i.e., without measuring levels) is recommended for certain populations including infants and children. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) makes the following recommendations:

- Exclusively breastfed infants or babies drinking less than 1 liter of baby formula per day need 400 IU of vitamin D daily.
- Older children who do not drink at least 4 cups of vitamin D fortified milk per day should receive vitamin D supplementation.

All prescription medications for low bone density (osteopenia or osteoporosis) should be given with calcium and vitamin D supplementation if dietary intake is inadequate.

FOLIC ACID (FOLATE)

Folic acid is the synthetic form of dietary folate (vitamin B9). Folic acid has a higher bioavailability than folate, which improves absorption from supplements and fortified foods. When reviewing RDI labeling, folic acid will have units listed in dietary folate equivalents (DFE): 600 mcg DFE ≅ 360 mcg of folic acid.

Because a folate deficiency during pregnancy causes birth defects of the brain and spinal cord (neural tube defects), all females of childbearing age should consume 400 mcg DFE/day. If pregnancy is planned, folate supplementation should be taken at least one month before pregnancy.

During pregnancy, folate requirements increase to 600 mcg DFE/day. Once pregnant, the patient will likely take a prescription prenatal vitamin, which usually contains 1,000 mcg DFE, throughout the pregnancy.

VITAMIN E

Vitamin E deficiencies are uncommon due to its presence in many foods. Although vitamin E in foods is considered healthy, excess intake of supplements can be harmful (e.g., ↑ bleeding risk). Patients should not exceed 400 IU daily. Unless there is a deficiency, vitamin E supplementation is generally not recommended.

THIAMINE

Alcohol use disorder and malabsorptive states (e.g., Crohn's disease, following bariatric surgery, advanced HIV) decrease thiamine (vitamin B1) absorption and can therefore cause a deficiency. Thiamine deficiency can cause Wernicke's encephalopathy, which is characterized by symptoms of mental confusion, ataxia, tremor and vision changes. If Wernicke's encephalopathy is not adequately treated, it can progress to Korsakoff syndrome (also called Korsakoff psychosis), which can result in permanent neurologic (mental) damage.

IRON

Iron deficiency can result in anemia and can negatively impact long-term neurodevelopment and behavior in young children.

AAP IRON RECOMMENDATIONS

AGE	IRON DEFICIENCY PREVENTION
0 – 4 months	Supplemental iron is not required; infants born full term should have sufficient iron stores.
4 – 6 months	Formulas-fed infants receive enough iron from formula; supplementation is not required. Breastfed babies need 1 mg/kg/day from 4-6 months old and until consuming iron-rich foods. At about 6 months, most breastfed babies get about half their calories from other foods, which may contain adequate amounts of iron.
6 – 12 months	Need 11 mg/day of iron. Food sources are preferred; supplement as needed.
1 – 3 years	Need 7 mg/day of iron. Food sources are preferred; supplement as needed.

PRETERM INFANTS

- Preterm (born at less than 37 weeks gestation) breastfed infants should receive 2 mg/kg/day of elemental iron supplementation from age 1 – 12 months. Most preterm formula-fed infants receive enough iron from formula, but some still require supplementation.

ADOLESCENT FEMALES

- Adolescent females are at an increased risk of anemia once menstruation begins. During this time, females should consume a diet high in iron-rich foods such as beans, eggs, fortified cereals and meats. Some will need an oral iron supplement.

IRON-ONLY SUPPLEMENTS (GENERICS AVAILABLE)

Check the label on iron drops because the amount of iron provided by the dropper ranges from 10 – 15 mg.

- *Fer-In-Sol* Iron Supplement Drops
- *Feosol* tablets and caplets

VITAMIN SUPPLEMENTS WITH IRON

- *Poly-Vi-Sol* Vitamin Drops with Iron: use if both vitamin D and iron supplementation are needed
- Others: *Flintstones* Children's Chewable Multivitamin plus Iron, store brands

DRUGS THAT CAUSE NUTRIENT DEPLETION

DRUG	DEPLETED NUTRIENT	CHAPTER
Amphotericin B	Potassium, magnesium	Infectious Diseases III
Antiseizure medications* (including carbamazepine, lamotrigine, oxcarbazepine, phenobarbital/primidone, phenytoin, topiramate, valproic acid/divalproex, zonisamide)	Calcium	Seizures/Epilepsy, Bipolar Disorder, others
Isoniazid	Vitamin B6	Infectious Diseases II (supplement for neuropathy prevention)
Loop Diuretics	Potassium, magnesium, sodium, chloride, calcium	Chronic Heart Failure
Metformin	Vitamin B12	Diabetes
Methotrexate	Folate	Systemic Steroids & Autoimmune Conditions, Oncology
Orlistat	Fat-soluble vitamins (A, D, E, K), beta-carotene	Weight Loss
Proton Pump Inhibitors	Magnesium, vitamin B12, calcium	GERD & PUD

**A supplement is needed for most patients using these drugs. Calcium should be given with vitamin D, if needed.*

CONDITIONS WITH RECOMMENDED SUPPLEMENTS

CONDITION	RECOMMENDED SUPPLEMENT	CHAPTER
Alcohol Use Disorder	Vitamin B1, folate	Hepatitis & Liver Disease
Bariatric Surgery	Various; can require iron, calcium, B vitamins, fat-soluble vitamins	Weight Loss
Crohn's Disease (possibly ulcerative colitis)	Patient-specific, depends on levels; can require iron, zinc, calcium, vitamin D, B vitamins	Inflammatory Bowel Disease
Chronic Kidney Disease	Vitamin D	Renal Disease
Goiter	Iodine (iodized salt)	Thyroid Disorders
Macrocytic Anemia	Vitamin B12 and/or folate	Anemia
Microcytic Anemia	Ferrous sulfate	Anemia
Pregnancy	Folate, calcium, vitamin D, pyridoxine (for nausea)	Pregnancy
Osteopenia/Osteoporosis	Calcium, vitamin D	Osteoporosis, Pregnancy

CANNABIDIOL (CBD)

The cannabis plant contains several compounds with different effects:

- Cannabidiol (CBD): non-psychoactive compound (does not cause a "high" or physical/psychological dependence) that may benefit patients with childhood epilepsy (Dravet syndrome and Lennox-Gastaut syndrome), anxiety, insomnia or chronic pain. While generally well-tolerated, it can cause nausea, diarrhea, fatigue and irritability.
- Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC): psychoactive compound (can cause a "high").

The legality of CBD is evolving. Currently, it is illegal to market CBD as a food or dietary supplement because it is available as a prescription drug (*Epidiolex* used in certain childhood seizures). This means nonprescription CBD products are not FDA-approved.

CBD can also be extracted from the hemp plant. Because hemp contains a lower amount of THC, it has been federally removed from the DEA's schedule of Controlled Substances. However, different states can have different restrictions on hemp-derived CBD products (e.g., on production and distribution).

HOMEOPATHIC PRODUCTS

Homeopathy is based on two principles:

- "The law of similars" where "like is cured by like." In other words, symptoms or diseases can be cured with a substance that produces similar symptoms or diseases. For example, homeopathic medicine made from coffee beans (a stimulant) benefits individuals who are overly stimulated (e.g., individuals with anxiety, restlessness, ADHD).
- Very small amounts of an active substance are used for treatment; lower doses are considered to have a more "potent" therapeutic effect.

Most homeopathic medicines are made from diluted amounts of the active substance, reported in X or C dilution scales.

- An X represents a 1:10 dilution of solute:solvent.
- A C represents a 1:100 dilution of solute:solvent.

The number in front of the X or C is the number of dilutions. A higher dilution (e.g., 30C) is considered more "potent" and could be seen in the treatment of more systemic symptoms (e.g., fever) or psychological/behavioral symptoms (e.g., insomnia). In contrast, a lower dilution (e.g., 6C) is considered less "potent" and could be seen to treat more localized symptoms (e.g., a sore throat).

Although there is some evidence supporting the clinical use of homeopathic medicines, more research is needed before it can be considered a conventional medicine option. The official compendium for homeopathic medicines is the Homeopathic Pharmacopoeia of the United States (HPUS), which is recognized by the FDA and equivalent to the United States Pharmacopoeia (USP). The HPUS publishes standards for homeopathic substances, including the identity, origin and quality assurance methods. The HPUS also determines what dilution of each medicine can be sold over the counter or with a prescription.

Since homeopathic medicines do not require FDA approval, manufacturers could distribute products with false claims, poor quality, measurable concentrations of drugs, nutrients or dietary supplements. In 2010, *Hyland's Teething Tablets* were recalled due to cases of belladonna toxicity. The amount of belladonna could be measured and was unsafe. In 2022, the FDA issued guidance on how to approach and prioritize regulatory actions for homeopathic products. It listed a risk-based and enforceable approach focusing on homeopathic products with the greatest risk to patients (e.g., products/ingredients with reported safety concerns, those with claims to treat or prevent serious medical conditions, products with significant quality issues).

Select Guidelines/References

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CHAPTER 80

TOXICOLOGY & ANTIDOTES

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= Study Tip Gal

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Pharmacy staff are involved in the response to disasters (e.g., natural disasters, industrial accidents, biological and chemical threats). They collaborate with federal, regional/state and local agencies to develop emergency response plans, including for drug distribution and stockpiling.

Pharmacy staff involved in emergency preparation should be well-informed about likely threats in their locality and should be familiar with emergency protocols for their institution or workplace, including those for evacuation, disaster preparedness, mass dispensing and poisoning emergencies. Legal issues regarding dispensing a drug during an emergency are discussed in the UWorld RxPrep MPJE and CPJE courses.

During a public health emergency, the FDA can issue an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA). An EUA authorizes the use of unapproved medications or unapproved indications for medications during a time of critical need when access to other drugs is limited.

Resources and recommendations for pharmacists are provided by the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP). Additionally, the CDC webpages on Emergency Preparedness and Response include recommendations for exposure to biological agents, information on current disease outbreaks and treatment for chemical and radiation exposure. Potassium iodide (KI), an antidote for exposure to radioactive iodine, is reviewed in the Thyroid Disorders chapter.

TOXICOLOGY

Toxicology is the study of the adverse effects of chemical exposures, including drugs used at unsafe doses. Children are the most common victims of accidental poisoning in the U.S. The top categories of exposures in children include cosmetics/personal care products, analgesics and cleaning substances. Accidental poisoning is common among the elderly, primarily due to mental or physical impairment, the use of multiple drugs and reduced elimination of drugs from the body.

Poisoning can be due to illicit drug use or the use of FDA-approved drugs (e.g., opioids) taken alone or with other drugs. General drug information resources, such as Micromedex or UpToDate Lexidrug, often contain toxicology information.

PREVENTION OF ACCIDENTAL OVERDOSE

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To reduce accidental poisoning in children, child-resistant (C-R) packaging, also known as special packaging (e.g., push-and-turn or squeeze-and-turn caps), is used. This packaging is required for most prescription drugs unless waived by the patient or the provider (in accordance with state and federal law). Some drugs are excluded from this requirement, such as nitroglycerin sublingual tablets.

Non-prescription (OTC) drugs that require C-R containers include diphenhydramine, iron, salicylates, acetaminophen, NSAIDs and drugs that have been switched from prescription to OTC status. Non-drug compounds that are toxic if swallowed require C-R packaging, such as turpentine. A list of drugs that must have C-R packaging is provided in the UWorld RxPrep MPJE course, since this is a federal legal requirement per the Poison Prevention Packaging Act (PPPA).

INITIAL OVERDOSE MANAGEMENT

If poisoning is suspected, anyone can contact Poison Control by phone (1-800-222-1222) to receive guidance and recommendations. Basic first aid for poisonings should be initiated immediately after the exposure.

- For topical exposure, remove contaminated clothing and wash skin with soap and water for at least 15 minutes to remove the poison from the skin.
- For ocular exposure, remove contact lenses and rinse eyes with a gentle stream of water for at least 15 minutes.
- For oral ingestion, remove any remaining substance from the mouth. If there are symptoms of burning or irritation, drink a small amount of water or milk.
- For inhaled exposure, move to fresh air immediately.
- For ingestion of button batteries, give two teaspoons of honey every 10 minutes while seeking immediate medical care. Ingestion can be fatal within hours, and honey or sucralfate can slow damage to the esophagus and airway.

Ipecac syrup, used previously to induce emesis for certain exposures, is no longer recommended or commercially available.

If a patient is unconscious, having difficulty breathing, appears agitated or is having a seizure, call 911. While waiting for emergency help to arrive, initiate basic life support (BLS). The first step of "CAB" (circulation, airway, breathing) is to evaluate if the patient has a pulse. If pulseless, immediately start cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) with chest compressions. Give two breaths for every 30 chest compressions. At a minimum, hands-only CPR is encouraged. When emergency medical personnel arrive, supportive care (e.g., blood pressure support, airway management) will be initiated.

HOSPITAL OVERDOSE MANAGEMENT

Correct identification of the ingested substance (or substances) will optimize treatment. Pharmacists can assist with identification by interviewing family or calling the patient's pharmacy. For some substances, specific antidotes or dialysis may be used. Antidotes for common overdoses are discussed later in the chapter. In many cases of overdose, more than one drug is involved and more than one antidote is required.

If the specific cause of the overdose remains unknown, patients are treated with supportive care and symptomatic treatment (see Study Tip Gal later in the chapter). Some overdoses have specific symptoms that can help healthcare providers identify the exposure or ingestion (see Additional Antidotes table later in the chapter).

Several dangerous compounds do not cause immediate symptoms after exposure. For example, in an acetaminophen overdose, the patient can remain asymptomatic or have non-specific symptoms (e.g., nausea, abdominal pain, fatigue) before end-organ toxicity (e.g., liver failure) becomes apparent. When evaluating overdoses, the clinician should consider how the formulation (e.g., extended- versus immediate-release) and the quantity and timing of ingestion can affect signs, symptoms and management.

DECONTAMINATION WITH ACTIVATED CHARCOAL

Activated charcoal is used in the emergency room treatment of certain orally ingested drugs or chemicals and is an early step in some overdose protocols. Although it is available OTC (e.g., for gas/bloating, odor control, toothbrushing), at-home administration for an overdose is not recommended.

To decrease drug absorption as much as possible (i.e., while the drug is still in the gut), activated charcoal is most effective when administered within one hour of drug ingestion. The charcoal adsorbs the drug, which prevents GI absorption and systemic toxicity. The dose of activated charcoal is 1 g/kg. Typically, only one dose of activated charcoal is administered. Multiple doses should only be considered if a patient has ingested a life-threatening amount of carbamazepine, dapsone, phenobarbital, quinine or theophylline.

Prior to using activated charcoal, the airway must be protected (with intubation, if needed) to prevent aspiration. Aspiration or inhalation of activated charcoal can cause respiratory failure, infection or death. Some ingested compounds, such as hydrocarbons (e.g., gasoline, paint thinner) can increase the risk of aspiration. Care must be taken to protect the airway from these ingestions.

Activated charcoal is contraindicated in the following situations:

- When the airway is unprotected, including when the patient:
  - ☐ Is unconscious
  - ☐ Cannot clear their throat
  - ☐ Cannot hold their head upright
- With intestinal obstruction
- When the gastrointestinal tract is not intact or when there is decreased peristalsis

Other complications of activated charcoal include constipation, bowel obstruction and regurgitation.

ANTIDOTES FOR COMMON POISONS

Antidotes reduce the harmful effects of the poison or overdosed drug. Many are used off-label. Per the American Association of Poison Control Centers (AAPCC), the most common substances involved in adult poisonings are analgesics, cardiovascular drugs, antidepressants, sedative hypnotics and antipsychotics. Analgesics include prescription (e.g., opioids) and non-prescription (e.g., acetaminophen) medications.

ACETAMINOPHEN

Acetaminophen is the most common cause of drug-induced liver injury (DILI). Excessive ingestion can lead to hepatotoxicity; limiting acetaminophen from all sources to < 4,000 mg per day reduces this risk.

Hepatotoxicity is a dose-dependent adverse effect caused by increased metabolism of acetaminophen by CYP450 2E1 to *N*-acetyl-*p*-benzoquinone imine (NAPQI) (see figure below). NAPQI binds to liver cell proteins and causes liver injury, and ultimately, liver failure. Acetaminophen overdose presents in four phases:

- Phase 1 (1 – 24 hours): commonly asymptomatic or non-specific symptoms are present, such as nausea and vomiting.
- Phase 2 (24 – 72 hours): hepatotoxicity evident on labs (e.g., elevated AST/ALT and INR); symptoms from phase 1 usually subside.
- Phase 3 (72 – 96 hours): fulminant hepatic failure (e.g., jaundice, coagulopathy, renal failure, death).
- Phase 4 (> 96 hours): recovery or liver transplant.

In patients who present with hepatotoxicity, the antidote, N-acetylcysteine (NAC), should be administered as soon as possible (preferably within 8 hours) to minimize the progression to hepatic failure and death.

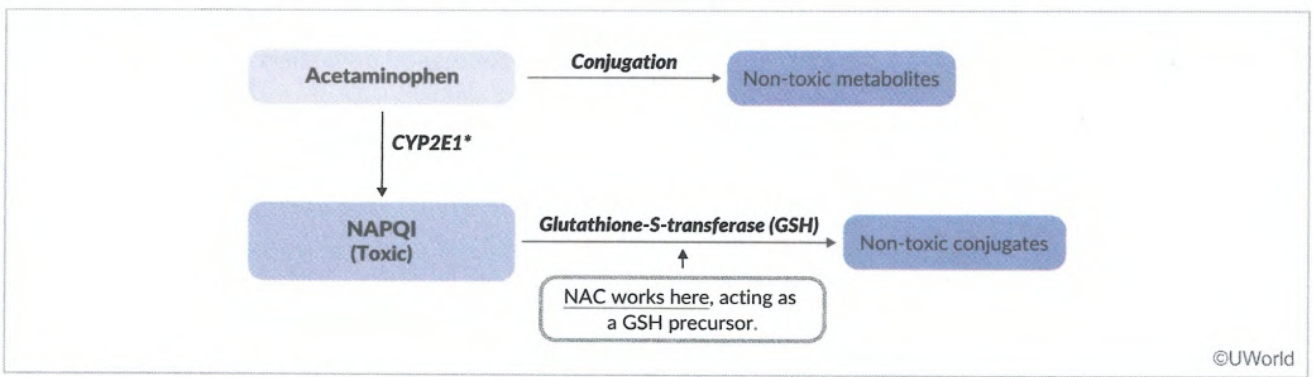
In patients without hepatotoxicity, an acetaminophen level (drawn 4 – 24 hours after ingestion) is used to guide treatment. The level is plotted on the Rumack-Matthew nomogram to determine the risk of hepatotoxicity and need for NAC. See the Study Tip Gal below for information on NAC treatment.

NAC is available in both oral and IV formulations. Both are effective, but the IV form is used more often due to intolerance (e.g., foul odor, vomiting) to the oral form; it is also preferred in select scenarios (e.g., pregnancy, hepatotoxic on presentation).

N-ACETYLCYSTEINE (NAC) TREATMENT

- N-acetylcysteine *(Acetadote)* mechanism: free radical scavenger and precursor to glutathione (GSH). Ultimately increases GSH, which converts NAPQI to non-toxic metabolites.
- Treatment: use the Rumack-Matthew nomogram to determine the need for NAC (IV or oral).
  - Oral NAC (using injectable or inhalation solution): single loading dose, followed by a maintenance dose Q4H for 17 doses. Repeat the dose if emesis occurs within 1 hour of administration.
  - IV NAC: loading dose, followed by 1 – 2 additional infusions for a total treatment duration of 20 – 21 hours.

ACETAMINOPHEN METABOLISM AND USE OF N-ACETYLCYSTEINE (NAC)



**CYP pathway only activated with excessive acetaminophen levels.*
NAPQI: N-acetyl-p-benzoquinone imine

OPIOIDS

Opioid overdose and related deaths have become an epidemic in the U.S. Acute opioid overdose can lead to life-threatening respiratory depression and sedation. The effects of opioids can be reversed if the appropriate antidote, naloxone or nalmefene, is administered quickly. There are minimal to no adverse effects associated with giving naloxone to a patient who did not ingest opioids. Opioid reversal products are covered in the Pain chapter.

ADDITIONAL ANTIDOTES

DRUG OVERDOSE/POISON	SYMPTOMS/TREATMENT
Anticholinergics: atropine, diphenhydramine, dimenhydrinate, scopolamine, *Atropa belladonna* (deadly nightshade), jimson weed	Symptoms: "red as a beet" (flushing), "dry as bone" (dry skin and mucous membranes), "blind as a bat" (mydriasis with double or blurry vision), "mad as a hatter" (altered mental status), "hot as a hare" (fever) Primarily supportive care, rarely physostigmine is given; physostigmine inhibits the enzyme acetylcholinesterase, which breaks down acetylcholine (ACh); this ↑ ACh and ↓ anticholinergic toxicity
Anticoagulants: warfarin, direct thrombin inhibitors, factor Xa inhibitors, heparin, low molecular weight heparins	Symptoms: bleeding Treatment is anticoagulant specific: see the Anticoagulation chapter Andexanet alfa *(Andexxa)*: apixaban, rivaroxaban Idarucizumab *(Praxbind)*: dabigatran Phytonadione (vitamin K): warfarin Protamine: heparin, low molecular weight heparin Prothrombin complex concentrate (e.g., *Kcentra)*: warfarin
Antipsychotics	Symptoms: seizures Primarily supportive care, benztropine can be given for dystonia, benzodiazepines can be given for seizures and bicarbonate can be given if there is QRS-interval widening
Benzodiazepines	Flumazenil: can cause seizures when used in patients taking benzodiazepines chronically; sometimes used for non-benzodiazepine hypnotic overdose (e.g., zolpidem), but not routinely recommended
Beta-blockers	Supportive care (e.g., fluids, vasopressors), glucagon (if unresponsive to supportive treatment) High-dose insulin with dextrose may be used in patients refractory to glucagon Lipid emulsion to enhance elimination of some lipophilic drugs (e.g., labetalol, propranolol, metoprolol)
Calcium channel blockers	Same as beta-blockers plus: IV calcium (chloride or gluconate): avoid fast infusion, monitor ECG, do not infuse calcium in same line as phosphate-containing solutions
Cyanide: smoke inhalation, nitroprusside in high doses, long durations, and/or renal impairment	Hydroxocobalamin *(Cyanokit)* Sodium thiosulfate + sodium nitrite *(Nithiodote)*
Digoxin, oleander, foxglove	Digoxin immune Fab *(DigiFab)* Each *DigiFab* 40 mg vial binds ~0.5 mg digoxin; when the amount ingested or digoxin level is unknown, the max adult dose is 20 vials Interferes with digoxin levels drawn after it has been given
Ethanol (alcoholic drinks)	Can cause an ↑ anion gap If chronic alcohol use suspected, administer thiamine (vitamin B1) to prevent Wernicke's encephalopathy (neurological damage)

DRUG OVERDOSE/POISON	SYMPTOMS/TREATMENT
5-fluorouracil (5-FU), capecitabine	Uridine triacetate *(Vistogard)*
Heavy metals: arsenic, copper, gold, lead, mercury, thallium	Dimercaprol: arsenic, gold, mercury Dimercaprol +/- EDTA +/- succimer *(Chemet*, DMSA): lead Ferric hexacyanoferrate ["Prussian blue" *(Radiogardase)]:* thallium Penicillamine: copper
Hydrocarbons: petroleum products, gasoline, kerosene, mineral oil, paint thinners	Do not induce vomiting; keep patient NPO due to aspiration risk
Insulin, hypoglycemics (e.g., sulfonylureas)	Oral glucose (do not administer if the patient is unconscious) IV dextrose (can use glucagon if dextrose cannot be administered) Sulfonylurea-induced hypoglycemia: octreotide *(Sandostatin)*
Isoniazid	Symptoms: seizures, altered mental status IV pyridoxine (vitamin B6) and benzodiazepines Oral pyridoxine 10–50 mg is used daily with isoniazid to prevent neuropathy
Iron and aluminum	Deferoxamine *(Desferal):* iron and aluminum Deferiprone *(Ferriprox)* or deferasirox *(Exjade, Jadenu)*: iron overload from chronic blood transfusions
Local anesthetics (bupivacaine, mepivacaine, ropivacaine) and other lipophilic drugs	IV lipid emulsion 20%
Methotrexate	IV sodium bicarbonate to alkalinize the urine Leucovorin (a reduced form of folic acid) or levoleucovorin: "rescue" therapy after high-dose cancer treatment to prevent toxicities Glucarpidase *(Voraxaze):* rapidly lowers methotrexate levels in patients with acute kidney injury and delayed methotrexate clearance
Methemoglobinemia from topical benzocaine (in *OraGel* or teething products), dapsone, nitrates or sulfonamides	Methylene blue *(ProvayBlue):* methylene blue is contraindicated in patients with G6PD deficiency; avoid administration with SSRIs and SNRIs (risk for serotonin syndrome)
Mushrooms (amatoxin-containing)	Treat severe muscarinic symptoms (e.g., bradycardia) with atropine
Neostigmine, pyridostigmine	Pralidoxime *(Protopam):* counteracts the muscle weakness and/or respiratory depression secondary to overdose of acetylcholinesterase inhibitors used to treat myasthenia gravis Atropine or glycopyrrolate can be given to prevent bradycardia from neostigmine
Nicotine, including e-cigarettes	Early symptoms: abdominal pain, nausea, diaphoresis, tachycardia, tremors Later symptoms: bradycardia, dyspnea, lethargy, coma, seizures Supportive care (e.g., atropine for symptomatic bradycardia, benzodiazepines for seizures)
Organophosphates (OPs), including insecticides (e.g., malathion) and nerve gases (e.g., sarin)	OPs block acetylcholinesterase, which ↑ ACh levels and causes cholinergic "SLUDD" symptoms (salivation, lacrimation, urination, diarrhea/defecation; see Study Tip Gal on next page) Atropine: anticholinergic which blocks the effects of ACh to reduce symptoms Pralidoxime *(Protopam):* treats muscle weakness and relieves paralysis of respiratory muscles by reactivating acetylcholinesterase Atropine and pralidoxime *(DuoDote)*

DRUG OVERDOSE/POISON	SYMPTOMS/TREATMENT
Paralytics (e.g., rocuronium, vecuronium, pancuronium)	To reverse the effects of neuromuscular blockade in adults undergoing surgery Neostigmine *(Bloxiverz)*: rocuronium, vecuronium and pancuronium Sugammadex *(Bridion)*: rocuronium and vecuronium
Salicylates	Sodium bicarbonate: alkalinizes the urine, which ↓ drug reabsorption and ↑ excretion
Stimulants: amphetamines, including ADHD and weight loss drugs, cocaine, ephedrine, caffeine, theophylline, MDMA (ecstasy)	Benzodiazepines for agitation or seizures
Toxic alcohols: ethylene glycol (antifreeze), diethylene glycol, methanol	Can cause an ↑ anion gap Fomepizole is preferred; ethanol (if fomepizole is unavailable)
Tricyclic antidepressants (TCAs)	Overdose can quickly cause fatal arrhythmias Sodium bicarbonate: to ↓ a widened QRS complex Benzodiazepines for agitation or seizures Vasopressors for hypotension
Valproic acid or topiramate-induced hyperammonemia	Levocarnitine *(Carnitor)*

ORGANOPHOSPHATE OVERDOSE

SLUDD SYMPTOMS	TREATMENT	CAUSES
Salivation **L**acrimation **U**rination **D**iarrhea **D**efecation	Atropine: blocks the effects of acetylcholine Pralidoxime: reactivates acetylcholinesterase Atropine and pralidoxime	Organophosphates include pesticides. People working on farms are at risk.

SYMPTOMATIC TREATMENT OF OVERDOSE/POISONING

In overdose situations, it is not always known what substance was taken or if it was more than one substance. Symptoms and labs (sometimes referred to as toxidromes) guide initial treatment.

Possible Actions

- Support circulation, airway and breathing as impairments can be life-threatening.
  - Use fluids and vasopressors for hypotension, atropine for bradycardia and mechanical ventilation for a compromised airway.
  - Shallow breathing with somnolence and pinpoint pupils could be an opioid overdose. Administer naloxone.
- Treat seizures or severe agitation with benzodiazepines.
- Treat hypoglycemia with oral carbohydrates (if patient is alert), IV dextrose or glucagon.
- If an ECG demonstrates QT prolongation or QRS widening, administer sodium bicarbonate.
- Check an acetaminophen level and use the Rumack-Matthew nomogram to determine if NAC should be given.

ANTIDOTES FOR COMMON BITES AND STINGS

TOXIN	ANTIDOTE	COMMENTS
Mammal bites	Rabies vaccine *(RabAvert, Imovax Rabies)* + human rabies immune globulin *(HyperRAB S/D, Imogam Rabies-HT)*	Clean wound with soap and water. Tetanus vaccine is required if ≥ 10 years since the last booster vaccine. High-risk mammal bites or exposure (no previous rabies vaccination): give vaccine + human rabies immune globulin (HRIG). Vaccine given IM in the deltoid (adults) or thigh (children, infants) on days 0, 3, 7 and 14 + immune globulin 20 units/kg given on day 0, infiltrated around wound site and a location separate from vaccine site. HRIG is not useful after day 7 of vaccine or in previously immunized individuals. See the Immunizations chapter for more details.
Black Widow spider bites	Antivenin for *Latrodectus mactans*	The primary treatment is supportive care (opioids for pain and benzodiazepines for muscle spasms). Antivenin may be administered for severe symptoms unresponsive to supportive care.
Scorpion stings	Antivenin immune Fab *Centruroides (Anascorp)*	Scorpions with venom potent enough to cause clinically severe symptoms are found mainly in the southwest.
Snake bites (copperhead, cottonmouth, rattlesnake)	Crotalidae polyvalent immune Fab *(CroFab)* Crotalidae Immune $F(ab')_2$ *(Anavip)*	Do not use ice; do not cut/suck out venom; transport patient to healthcare facility.

Select Guidelines/References

International Consensus on Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation and Emergency Cardiovascular Care Science With Treatment Recommendations: Summary From the Basic Life Support; Advanced Life Support; Pediatric Life Support; Neonatal Life Support; Education, Implementation, and Teams; and First Aid Task Forces. *Circulation*. 2024.

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Poison Control Center. http://poison.org.